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THOMAS WHITTAKER,
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OLD PATHS.

A COURSE OF SERMONS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

BY

JOHN N. NORTON

ASSOCIATE RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.: AUTHOR OF "EVERY SUNDAY,"
"GOLDEN TRUTHS," "WARNING AND TEACHING," ETC

*"We are travelling home to God,
In the way our fathers trod."*

NEW YORK
THOMAS WHITTAKER

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P R E F A C E.

"There have been many," says Bishop Wilson, in his *Sacra Privata*, "who, without any great learning or eloquence, yet by their communication in a humble and low way, have instructed and converted more than famous preachers."

In sending forth this *sixth* volume of plain sermons, the author congratulates himself that he must belong to the class of preachers thus described, inasmuch as captious critics have complained that this series is "too much in the story-telling vein," and that the profound thought of Bampton Lectures is nowhere to be found therein. The fact that the Divine Teacher never spake unto the people "without a parable" (St. Matt. xiii. 34), is a sufficient answer to the first charge, since no higher model could be asked for. As to the second, the writer rejoices that he has not reached the high standard of the metropolitan pulpit, since the very purpose for which his publications are designed would thus have been most effectually defeated. If the testimony of thousands who have read these sermons with profit; if the accounts of many of our bishops and other clergy, telling of infidel doubts removed, of family altars set up, of persons brought to confirmation; and of the fact that an English Colonial bishop furnished, at his own cost, a supply for all the rural parishes in his jurisdiction;—if these are evidences of God's favor, then the author has had his reward.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY,
September, 1880.

"I like direct practical preaching, which helps one to live as a pilgrim on a journey. Now some preach as if they were telling how to make shoes, instead of making them; as if they were describing the process of shoe-making to those who wanted to be shod. They would have their hearers all taught to be capital shoemakers while you want to be a shoe wearer. They tell you all about the leather, the resin, and the awl; while it's a rough road for bare feet and cold, that you must travel constantly."—*Dr. J. Duncan.*

"George Herbert says, 'It is an ill mason that refuseth any stone; and there is no knowledge but, in a skillful hand, serves either positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge.' In all ages they have been the greatest powers, both in the pulpit, in the classroom, and on the platform, who have kept this truth in mind. The Fathers of the early Church, who lived in days nearest to those of the Son of Man—the Puritans, whose names are inspiration still—enrich their discourses with simile, metaphor and anecdote. These made all nature, all history, all the lives of men their treasury, out of which to bring the 'new' things which were to embellish and enforce the 'old.'"—*Dr. W. M. Punshon.*

"Whitefield understood the power of illustration. He ever kept the volume of nature open before him, delighting to unfold its magnificent pages. The ocean, the thunder-storm, the bow encircling the heavens, furnished him with themes to illustrate his subject; or a trial, or a pilot-fish, or a furnace—in fact, any thing and every thing, whether magnificently grand or ever so insignificant, he made subservient to his oratorical powers. His eloquence reminded one of the ocean, adding, as it does, to its own boundlessness, contributions from every part of the universe. Well has it been said that Whitefield 'ransacked creation for figures, time for facts, heaven for motives, hell for warnings, and eternity for arguments.'"—*Philips.*

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OLD PATHS.



SERMON I.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

(First Sunday in Advent.)

“The desire of all nations shall come.”—HAGGAI ii., part of 7th verse.

At the time of the Babylonish captivity, the glorious temple at Jerusalem, built by Solomon, was utterly destroyed.

In the first year of Cyrus, the poor heart-broken people who had found their way back to the sacred spot where the holy city had once stood, began, with devout zeal, to build again the Lord's house (Ezra ii.). They were, however, so often stopped in the work, by their enemies (iv. 1-24), that during fourteen years they made little or no attempt to carry out their heart's desire.

When Darius ascended the throne, the decree of Cyrus was renewed, and about five hundred and twenty years before our Saviour's birth, at Bethlehem, the prophet Haggai appeared, encouraging the builders to set about their work in earnest, by this remarkable prediction: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, *and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with*

glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, . . . and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

Here was a distinct prophecy of the Saviour's coming, and it can be appropriately referred to Him alone.

Observe the distinguished title here bestowed on the Messiah,—"*The desire of all nations.*"

That such a divine personage was looked for by the Jews is seen in the uniform testimony of their prophets.

He was the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. He was the promised Shiloh who should gather the dispersed sheep into His ample fold (Gen. xlix. 10). He was the King of Zion to rule forever on David's glorious throne (Ps. ii. 8). He was the "Mighty God," the Prince of peace (Isa. vii. 14). He was the Supreme Lord, whom Malachi describes as coming suddenly to His temple. He was "the consolation of Israel," for which many, like old Simeon, waited with unshaken confidence (St. Luke ii. 29).

From the fact that multitudes of Jews were scattered over the world, carrying with them the Old Testament Scriptures and the traditions of their fathers, it is not surprising that Christ had become "*The desire of all nations.*"

Socrates, the wisest and best of the heathen philosophers, expressed the hope that God would send an instructor to teach men how to offer their prayers with acceptance.

Suetonius and Tacitus, both distinguished Roman authors, affirmed that the book of the fates declared that out of Judea an illustrious personage should come who should have universal dominion.

Well might our adorable Saviour be spoken of as "*The desire of all nations.*"

Is He not the *kinsman* of the whole human family? Although of the seed of Abraham, and belonging to the Jewish nation, He is, at the same time, the *brother* of every child of man, and He is ready to be the Saviour of all.

He was "*The desire of all nations,*" because He only could bestow those precious blessings which the world needed. Without Christ human nature was guilty, polluted, wretched, lost. He was to be the *regenerator* of that nature; the author of its deliverance, its happiness, and its eternal rest.

The Lord Jesus was, emphatically, "*The desire of all nations,*" because all nations shall one day be made happy in Him.

His blessed reign is to be that of righteousness and peace, and the song of universal joy which shall swell forth at last in harmony with harps of gold, will be, "*Hallelujah, for the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ*" (Rev. xi. 15).

"All whereof men had only a troubled dream before, became, in Him, a waking reality; what men were devising, and most inadequately, for themselves, God has perfectly given us in His Son; in the room of shifting cloud palaces, with their mockery of temple and tower, stands for us a City which hath come down from heaven, but whose foundations rest upon this earth of ours. . . . The divine ideas which had wandered up and down the world, till oftentimes they had well-nigh forgotten themselves and their own origin, did at length clothe themselves in flesh and blood; they became incarnate with

the Incarnation of the Son of God" (Trench's Hulsean Lectures).

For four thousand years the accomplishment of the prophecy had been looked for, and at last, in the fulness of time, the long-expected Messiah came.

He appeared—

1. *At the very period marked out for His birth.*

Daniel's seventy weeks were ended and the sceptre had departed from Judah.

2. *Again: The Saviour came in the very manner which had been foretold.*

He was born in Bethlehem; His mother was an humble virgin; His earthly portion was most obscure.

3. *The Lord Jesus Christ, "The desire of all nations," came for the performance of the very work which had been before marked out for Him.*

He was sent to be the *light* of this dark world; to teach the nations groping in ignorance; to exhibit a perfect pattern of holiness; and, above all, to suffer for sin, and thus make our peace with God.

The prophecy of Haggai mentions certain remarkable events which should distinguish the Messiah's coming.

I. *All nations were to be shaken.*

A general convulsion of the chief empire of the earth is distinctly referred to, a convulsion which really came to pass. Between the period when this prophecy was delivered, and our Saviour's birth, the Assyrian dominion gave way to the Persian; the Persian was overturned by the Grecian; the Grecian yielded to the Roman; and Rome, having vanquished every nation which came within reach of her conquering eagles, fell into civil wars which lasted until universal peace prevailed in the days of Augustus.

Thus, when Christ came, the way was prepared before Him, and His gospel could readily be preached among all nations.

II. Another remarkable event which was to mark His advent was this, *that the Jewish temple should be filled with His glory.*

How could this part of the prophecy be brought to pass? It is a well-established fact, that in several important particulars the second temple was far inferior to the first; and yet the emphatic promise was, "*The glory of this latter house shall exceed that of the former.*"

The second temple was not to be compared with the first, either in size or external magnificence. It could not boast of its costly vessels of gold and silver, and it had not the ark, nor the tables of the law, nor the pot of manna, nor Aaron's marvellous rod; neither the glorious Shekinah, the Urim and Thummim, the gorgeous breast-plate; nor yet the sacred fires which came from heaven, and which had burned for ages on its altar. None of these were left; and yet Haggai assured the sorrowful old men who wailed aloud as they thought of the matchless temple of Solomon, so long their pride and joy, that "the glory of the latter house shall exceed that of the former." The Almighty could easily have brought up all the treasures of gold from the depths of the earth, had such adorning been necessary to render His sanctuary glorious; but it was not in riches, nor outward splendor, that such superiority would consist, but in the personal presence of the Divine Redeemer, "The desire of all nations": "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3).

They only who hold scriptural views concerning the

divinity of Christ, can explain the reason why the second temple was so greatly superior to the first.

“If Jesus be not the Messiah, we may say to the Jew, ‘Haggai’s prophecy has not been fulfilled, for your second temple is destroyed.’ If Jesus be not the Supreme God, we may say to the Socinian, ‘Haggai’s prophecy is not fulfilled, for God dwelt in the first temple; and there is no way in which the second can be greater, except as God, more perfectly manifested in Christ, was seen there’” (Dr. Lewis).

Our blessed Lord was the *infallible oracle*, making known God’s will; instead of the Urim and Thummim, by which, in difficulty and doubt, the high priest was divinely taught. He was the *perfect sacrifice* for sin, faintly shadowed forth by the mercy-seat of the ark. He was the *true fire*, which came down from above, to rekindle the expiring flame in the perishing soul; baptizing His followers “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” In short, it was in the second temple, at Jerusalem, that Mary’s Son, according to the flesh, but “the everlasting Son of the Father,” in majesty and dominion, “spake as never man spake” (St. John vii. 46). There, also, the Lord gave *peace*, according to His good promise, for there “the Prince of peace” appeared, making peace between God and man, and proclaiming “the gospel of *peace*,” whose provisions of mercy are freely offered to all.

Such is the great lesson which the Church is teaching her children, in the Advent services.

The same Lord Jesus Christ whose first coming was distinguished by the shaking of the heavens and the earth, at His next and more terrible appearing shall cause the heavens to pass away with a great noise, and

the elements to melt with fervent heat. We need not, however, be dismayed, nor cast down. If we are making the Saviour the desire of our hearts, and doing our best to serve Him, we shall be found of Him in peace, at the last, "without spot and blameless" (II Pet. iii. 15).

Live *in* Christ Jesus, in grateful faith. Live *by* Him, through the power of His Holy Spirit. Live *for* Him, in earnest and life-long consecration. If we travel at a snail's pace, and loiter by the way, Jesus will go on before us, and we shall be left to battle single-handed with temptation.

We are nearer, by a whole year, to the hour of death, and the Judgment Day, than when we heard the Advent warning before. Are we any the less worldly? Are we more prayerful and devoted; and better prepared for the Lord's appearing? Are we discovering in the Holy Scriptures, and His Blessed Sacraments, those precious treasures which His most devoted servants have dearly prized? Then may we lift up our heads, hopefully, trustingly; for our redemption draweth nigh.

SERMON II.

THE LAMP OF GOD'S HOLY WORD.

(*Second Sunday in Advent.*)

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."—PSALM cxix., part of 105th verse.

Our wondering eyes opened wide in childhood, as we listened, with unquestioning belief, to the old Arabian story of Aladdin's lamp. Although this was only a pleasant dream of the imagination, there is a lamp more wonderful than this. The royal Psalmist says of God's blessed book, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*"

As the journeyings of the Hebrew host by night were guided by a pillar of fire, not only directing their course in a general way, but every step and movement of it, so is our passage, through the bewildering paths of life, made luminous and safe by the unfailing light of God's Holy word.

When the Bible is represented as serving this all-important end, the whole, un mutilated book is meant, both the Old Testament and the New.

Suppose that a man has died, leaving a will, disposing of his property to certain persons; and that after the funeral they assemble, with grave faces, to hear the reading of the document in which they are all so much interested. Every thing goes on satisfactorily, until one of the company insists that a certain clause shall be struck out. Here another objector complains that a passage which conflicts with his individual interests must certainly be

an interpolation. The lawyer deliberately folds up the will, and says, "I can't settle this difficulty. We must go before the surrogate." The proper authority decides, "You must accept this will as a whole or not at all."

So with the last will and testament of our Lord and Saviour, as recorded in the Bible,—we must *accept* it *all* or *reject* it all.

The value of this precious legacy is brought clearly before us in the Collect for this day. While most of the collects are of very ancient date, this one, for the Second Sunday in Advent, appeared for the first time in the English Prayer Book of 1549. It is formed out of the Epistle for the day, and it may be fairly presumed that the compilers of the English Prayer Book "were eager to vindicate, for the newly-recovered treasure of God's word, its true dignity and importance. The free use of the sacred volume, which had been so long proscribed, must have seemed to them like little else than life from the dead,—the very Advent of Christ Himself" (Burgon).

When Edward the Sixth, at the age of nine, was crowned king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, three swords were brought to him, as a part of the grand ceremonial, signifying the extent of his dominion. The boy-king gravely said,—"There is yet one thing wanting."

An attendant, fearing lest some minute detail of the pageant had been forgotten, inquired what was lacking. Edward answered, "The Bible, the sword of the Spirit, without which we *are* nothing and can *do* nothing."

While *men* write books to instruct and encourage their fellow mortals, it would have been strange, indeed, had the great God never spoken to the millions of intelligent beings whom He had made. He *has* spoken to them in

the Bible. What a blank there would be, if this venerable book should be lost to the world! It is the only one which contains a special message from God.

The Bible claims to have been written during a period of about sixteen hundred years, the sacred canon being closed a little before the year of our Lord 100. It claims that many of the books which it contains were written by the men whose names they bear, and it claims literary credibility for them, insisting that the historical parts are credible as history, the poetical parts as poetry, etc. The Bible claims to be the record of a true and a divine religion. It claims to be inspired—in other words, that while God has not controlled the writers of the different books, so far as diversity of style is concerned, He *has* so far directed and governed them that they have written down in substance just what He chose to have recorded as His word.

This wonderful volume, made up of so many different books, could have had no human author, because it has one prominent idea which runs through the whole. The Old Testament is a collection of Hebrew books, and the New Testament is a collection of Greek books, the two separated by hundreds of years as to the time when they were written, and yet there is a perceptible unity of purpose which can only be explained by the fact that the Bible is the inspired word of God. All the books of the Bible are bound together by a golden thread.

A celebrated artist once made a curious shield, into the fabric of which his own name was so ingeniously wrought that it could not be removed without destroying the shield. In like manner is our adorable Lord and Saviour so inwoven with the texture of the whole

Bible, that any attempt to obliterate His divine image destroys the sacred book itself. "A book like this—so strange, so hard, and yet so beautiful—is like a trap rock which cuts through all the regular deposits and exhibits itself above them all to the astonishment of observers" (Bishop Goodwin).

No book has ever been tried by tests so severe and exacting as the Bible, and yet it has stood them all. The more carefully that the field of ancient history has been explored, by the aid of the important discoveries of modern times, the more convincing has been the evidence in support of the truth of God's word. The multiplication of minute points of agreement between the sacred and the profane, which has been proved by the deciphering of the records of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Egypt, are most significant.

The Moabite Stone, found by accident, in 1868, is covered with characters like the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The stone is a pillar of triumph, erected by Mesha, king of Moab, of whom we read in II Kings iii. 4-27.

The Old Testament is, therefore, no longer a solitary volume of the misty past, unsupported by other evidence.

Unbelief has been ringing the changes on the supposed fact that the antiquity of the Hebrew oracles could not be established; but the quibbling of the objector is rebuked by the indelible inscription on this ancient monument in the plains of Moab.

The world can not *afford* to put out the lamp of God's truth, even granting that it had the *power* to do so. "Science owes to the gospel its methods of study. That chemistry is not alchemy, that astronomy is not astrology, is due to the gospel. Literature is the child

of the Church. There is no standard for the laws of nations, except the declared character of the great Law-giver and King, as shown in the works of men inspired by God to teach. All social reforms are the outflow of the gospel. Home traces its sweetness and sacredness to the home in Nazareth" (S. H. Tyng, Jr.).

In short, the Bible is what David calls it in the text, —a *lamp* to light up the way in which we should walk. When we remember how long this precious lamp has been burning; to what a great distance its light penetrates; with what complete distinctness it reveals the difficulties and dangers of the road; and what real comfort it affords to those who follow its guidance, — we may call it *wonderful*.

The electric light, of modern discovery, promises to brighten the pathway of the laboring ship in the darkness of the blinding storm, but the lamp of God's word can do more.

Not long ago the passengers on board an ocean steamer were thrown into great alarm by a furious tempest. The women and children had retired for the night, and anxious husbands and fathers crowded around the cabin door, speaking words of encouragement to the dear ones within.

"Stewardess," said one of the gentlemen, "my daughter is in state-room number eleven. I fear she is much alarmed. Will you give her this?" handing her a small slip of paper. The obliging woman did as she was asked, but found the daughter too ill to read it.

"Please read it for me," she said to the stewardess, "my head aches so that I am almost blind."

Holding the paper to the light, the kind attendant

read—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on Thee."

"A precious verse, miss," said the stewardess, "it has given me comfort many times."

The storm raged on, and the alarm of many of the passengers showed itself in groans and shrieks.

Amidst the bewildering confusion, the stewardess, who tried to be of use wherever she was most needed, noticed that the young lady in number eleven had left her berth and was kneeling in silent prayer. Going up to her, she said, "If you would read a few verses aloud, you might do much good."

The gentle girl went at once to the cabin table and began, in a low, tremulous voice, the 107th Psalm. The stewardess passed from one state-room to another, and whispered, "Hush! the young lady is reading!"

Profound silence followed, and when the psalm was ended, thanks were heard from every side. There was a great calm. Wonderful lamp, this lamp of God's word! It not only sheds its brightness on all the bewildering paths of life, but its far-reaching power extends beyond the grave.

As each child of God, in his turn (each one of us must go alone), draws near the border line which divides time from eternity, an unseen hand holds aloft the cheering lamp of God's word, all fear is banished, and he whispers to himself the precious utterances of the soul which is staid on God, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Ps. xxiii. 4).

How can there be *darkness* to the believer when he thus comes in contact with the *light* of life?

SERMON III.

THE LORD'S SECOND COMING.

(*Third Sunday in Advent.*)

“The Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.”—ST. MARK xiii. 34.

A COMMUNITY of monks was established on the shores of the Bosphorus, during the fourth century, called “*The Sleepless Ones*.” They numbered three hundred, and were divided into six choirs who sang alternately. Day and night, without ceasing, their songs of praise arose to that Divine Redeemer, who will one day come to be our judge. Thus, with unflagging diligence, they looked out for the return of the Bridegroom.

Without following the example of those old monks in their giving up worldly business, and their mistaken notion that they were any better because they wore miserable clothes and denied themselves comfortable food and lodging,—without following their example in these respects, yet, if we are the wise and enlightened generation that we claim to be, we shall give heed to the voice of warning now sounding through all the world in the services of Advent, reminding us emphatically that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

The image employed in the text, which represents Him as a traveller who has gone “into a far country,”

is one so much in harmony with our human sympathies, that it brings Him very close to our hearts. Jesus has left His people for a season, just as a man leaves his home, to sojourn in a distant land; a man whose letters are devoured with eagerness by the dear ones, who are impatiently awaiting his return.

Where our Lord's journey may reach to, it is not for us to know. "The expression that He is 'taking a journey,' rather implies that He is still travelling; perhaps on some mission of love, such as brought Him here, to other worlds far off. But it is only a journey, and whatever other home He may have in other worlds, certainly this is one of His homes which He has left; for it is 'His own house,' and 'His own servants,' and 'His own work,' which He has left" (James Vaughan).

God's Church is described in the parable, as His house. The master of the house, while taking his journey, is always present in spirit, with His people. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (St. John i. 14). "The tabernacle of God was with men" (Rev. xxi. 3).

During our Lord's absence, His servants, in their several orders and degrees, are supposed to be occupied in His work. Clergy and people alike are His servants; and it should make them happy to be assured that they can in any way be useful to Him.

The Christian must have a hard heart, who can not enter into the spirit of the little child who exclaimed in the earnestness of her devotion, "How I wish I had lived when Jesus was in the world! I could have run on errands for Him!" This is precisely what every one of us can do. All that is lacking is the will. The opportunities are ever present to those who look for them.

The period when the Son of Man is taking His journey, is one in which our fidelity is tested. Alas! how poorly do indolent Christians stand this test!

In the parable, the servants were to represent the master of the house during his absence, and to act in his behalf. They were actually put upon their honor; and instead of being mere eye-servants, they ought to have been doubly diligent and conscientious.

As the master left the house he gave special directions to the door-keeper to watch. He was to watch against thieves and robbers from without, and to watch for the master and be ready to welcome him on his return. The office of the porter represents that held by the ministers of Christ, who "watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Heb. xiii. 17). *Sleepy servants* are bad enough, but *sleepy watchmen* are worse.

These Advent services are reminding us of an event in which all have the most serious concern.

St. Luke fills out the picture which St. Mark has sketched in the text, when he says, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, *and to return*" (xix. 12). It is with reference to His return to judge the world, that our Lord gives the warning, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh: lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping" (St. Mark xiii. 36).

Indeed, references to this return of the Master of the house run through all the discourses of our blessed Lord; and, in the parable of the talents, He describes how, "after a long time, the Lord of these servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (St. Matt. xxv. 19).

Surely, then, every one should make it a personal

matter, watching and working with reference to the Lord's appearing. This second coming of the Saviour is the sum of all history, and the only event of the future in which our interests are most deeply concerned. It is, therefore, not only natural, but proper, that we should ask, like the disciples of old, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (St. Matt. xxiv. 3.)

Without endeavoring to be wise above that which is written, or seeking to pry into the secret things which God has chosen to keep hid, there *are* signs of the Lord's coming, which it becomes us to recognize.

Certain prophecies concerning the "times and seasons" when important events are to come to pass are purposely left in uncertainty, that we may ever be watching for the coming of the Lord. Nevertheless, when prophecies have actually been fulfilled, it is important that we should be aware of it.

We have lately been listening, in the Sunday lessons, to some of the remarkable predictions in the book of Daniel, and, without going much into detail, the natural unfolding of the subject will lead to the mention of a few of them.

Among other visions of the prophet was one of the four wild beasts rising out of the sea, diverse in appearance, the one from the other. These prefigured the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The Roman empire was symbolized by the fourth wild beast; and this terrible creature, besides its iron teeth, and claws of brass, is represented as having ten horns. These ten horns indicated the ten kingdoms into which the great empire was to be broken up. The

names of these ten kingdoms are familiar to every reader of history.*

As the prophet carefully observed the fourth wild beast with the ten horns, he saw a little horn rising up in the midst of the ten horns; and, strange to say, this little horn had eyes like a man, and a mouth which spake great things; and by gradual growth, and by crowding and usurpation, it gained ascendancy over temporal dominions.

This little horn was the bishop of Rome, who, in the year A. D. 606, openly claimed pontifical power, and began, as prophecy had foretold, to speak great swelling words of arrogance and presumption, and to change times and laws.

Amidst all the vicissitudes of the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire had been divided, the title of emperor was borne in succession by various rulers, until the archduke of Austria abdicated his office, in A. D. 1806. A new feudal empire then arose, of which Napoleon the First was the head, having two capitals, Paris and Rome. In order that it might be distinctly seen that this soldier of fortune had set up a dominion which was to occupy the place of the great Roman empire, his son was proclaimed "King of Rome."

The diligent student of prophecy saw in this emperor of the French, the seventh and last head of the wild beast; and as the angel who had explained the vision

* 1, The Vandals of North Africa; 2, the Suevi in Spain; 3, the Alani in Spain; 4, the Burgundians in Belgic Gaul; 5, the Franks in Gaul; 6, the Visigoths in Spain; 7, the Saxons in Britain; 8, the First Gothic Kingdom in Italy under Odoacer; 9, the Second Gothic Kingdom in Italy of the Ostrogoths; 10, the Lombard Kingdom in Italy.

declared that this seventh head should only last for a brief season, it excited no surprise when it was brought to an end, within ten years, by the defeat and abdication of Napoleon, after the battle of Waterloo.

About the time that Louis Napoleon was making himself the laughing-stock of Europe, by appearing in a gray overcoat, with an eagle perched on his shoulder, and setting up his shadowy claim to the throne of the First Napoleon, an army officer who was a profound student of the Bible, drew my attention to a book which greatly astonished me. It was entitled, "The Sacred Calendar of Prophecy," its author being George Stanley Faber, a learned clergyman of the English Church. He began as early as 1818 to express his views concerning the fulfilment of prophecy in the person of the French emperor, and after the overthrow of Napoleon the First, he surprised the world by insisting that, as St. John saw in the Apocalypse that the "deadly wound," received by the seventh head "was healed" (Rev. xiii. 3), therefore the French emperorship would be revived.

The angel speaks of "the beast" that "was, and is not, and shall be" (Rev. xvii. 8); and also, that this beast "is an eighth, and is of the seventh" (xvii. 11). The only explanation of this language was that the seventh head, which had been stricken, must be restored.

And so my friend and myself, with Mr. Faber's interpretation of the prophecy before us, watched, with intense interest, the progress of Louis Napoleon through the various stages of his advancement, until, in 1852, he was proclaimed emperor. For twenty years, the peace of Europe seemed to depend upon the word of this wild adventurer; and, to all intents and purposes, he wielded

the power of the Roman Cæsars. Without any intention of being so, he was the real founder of the kingdom of Italy, and the destroyer of the temporal power of the pope.

Thus you see that prophecy is in actual course of fulfilment before our eyes. The end of all things temporal is drawing on apace. He who, as a man journeying to a far country, has left His Church to the care of His servants, will ere long return. Are we all watching for His coming?

Something more than a hundred years ago, when London was shaken by an earthquake, a congregation assembled for worship was thrown into great consternation. While women and children were shrieking with dismay, and all believed that the Day of Judgment had come, Charles Wesley calmly arose, and quieted the tumult by repeating the 46th Psalm: "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

The Lord Jesus, for whose coming we are waiting, bids us *watch*. He only is watching for the Saviour, who is zealous in seeking and honoring Him; who daily thinks of his Lord as He came once in great humility, and as He will come again with power and glory.

Blessed are those faithful servants, who are so persistent in their watch that they can open to Him *immediately*, when He knocketh. "Resolve to be no longer beguiled by 'shadows of religion,' by words, or by disputings, or by notions, or by high professions, or by excuses, or by the world's promises or threats. Pray Him to give you what Scripture calls 'an honest and

good heart,' or a perfect heart; and, without waiting, begin at once to obey Him with the best heart you have" (Newman).

The duke of Norfolk came one day to dine with Sir Thomas More, and, to his surprise, found the lord high chancellor of the kingdom (only a layman as he was) arrayed in a surplice, and singing with the choir in the Church service.

"What!" said the duke, as they walked home together, "my lord chancellor playing the parish-clerk! Sure you dishonor the king and your office!"

"Nay," answered Sir Thomas; "you must not deem that the king will be offended at my honoring *his* Master."

Any service that you and I, dear friends, render to our Divine Lord, will be remembered by Him at His coming.

SERMON IV.

THE SEED OF THE WOMAN BRUISING THE SERPENT'S HEAD.

(Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
GENESIS iii. 15.

WE here find ourselves spectators of a scene of surpassing interest. A trial is in progress. The court is held in the garden of Eden. The culprits are Adam and Eve, and that old serpent, the devil. The judge is the Almighty One Himself.

The two opening chapters of Genesis describe the work of creation; and the earth, so fair and beautiful, seems almost like heaven.

"Now the descent begins. The steps are no longer upward, but downward. Creaturehood can not stand alone. The moment that it is left to itself it totters, it falls. It must be joined to the Creator before it can stand" (Bonar).

The devil, assuming the form of a serpent, had tempted the woman to disregard the divine prohibition concerning the tree of knowledge, by persuading her that the threatened consequences would not follow. So far from being punished, he actually made her believe that, by eating of this tempting fruit, a supernatural wisdom

would be gained enabling her to discriminate between good and evil.

Progress! That was the bait held out by Satan. And mark his cunning craft. He does not say that by eating of the forbidden fruit she should know more of God Himself, but more of good and *evil*. There is a marvellous fascination in the idea of knowing *evil*. The woman wishes to be wise. She says within herself, "Surely there can be no harm in *that!*"

With the same shallow sophistry the devil still lures his victims to their ruin.

Eve yields to the temptation, and, in falling, drags her husband down.

The devil had told the truth in part. The knowledge of our first parents *was*, indeed, increased; but it was a practical knowledge of sin and misery. In a moment, they were conscious of the loss of purity, and endeavored to remove their sense of shame by putting on a covering of fig-leaves.

And now the trial comes. The gracious Father, whom they have so wilfully disobeyed, calls them to account. He questions them; and, one by one, the facts are all drawn out. Adam and Eve blame each other, and blame the devil; but they sullenly confess the truth. Each of the guilty parties then receives sentence.

The tempter himself is condemned to a state of utter degradation and servility. Perpetual enmity is to be kept up between his hateful race and that of the misguided woman.

God reveals His love to the erring ones by promising to raise up a deliverer, the son of the woman, who, though not without wounds, should finally destroy the enemy.

The sentence of the woman is next pronounced: subjection to the man, and pains and distresses peculiar to her sex. No curse, indeed, but a chastisement, and a memorial of her sin.

• Lastly, Adam's punishment is declared. The ground must be cultivated with hard and incessant toil; the path of life shall be marked with disappointment and sorrow, until, at length, death should close his season of probation upon earth.

The serpent was, no doubt, remarkable for its beauty, and splendor of appearance; and it is probable that on this account the tempter selected it as the agent for accomplishing his evil purposes in regard to Adam and Eve. Attracted by the loveliness of the creature, and its graceful movements, the woman was unconsciously prepared to listen to the proposals which it was authorized to make.

One part of the curse which God pronounced upon the serpent was, that it should feed on *dust*. Isaiah, also, declares that "*dust shall be the serpent's meat*" (lxv. 15). Micah repeats the idea, in the words "They shall lick the *dust* like a serpent" (vii. 37).

It is true that serpents eat flesh, fruits, and grass; but as they creep upon the earth their food must, of necessity, often be mixed with dust; and some, very likely, eat it.

Adam and Eve, having broken the first covenant with God, had no hope whatever from this source. He, therefore, in tender compassion, "laid help upon One that is mighty," and provided for them, and for us, a full and free salvation.

The terms in which the prophecy of deliverance was

expressed were dark and mysterious; but, at the same time, they were plain enough to revive man's blasted hopes. As the gigantic oak, with its wide-spreading branches, is contained in the acorn, so was the whole plan of salvation embraced in the remarkable prediction addressed to the serpent: "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.*"

Thus, open and long-continued war was announced between Satan, whose agent the serpent was, and man, who had been made the dupe of his deceitful wiles.

Not only so, but, as the prophecy was spoken in the hearing of Adam and Eve, it must be regarded, also, as a gracious promise, designed to keep them from despair, and to point out a way of escape from wretchedness, to be more clearly revealed in time to come. As they looked upon the wily spirit, which had brought upon them misery so great, their hearts must have swelled with satisfaction to know that the destroyer of their peace would not escape unpunished; and that a loving and forgiving Father had even then arranged a plan by which the impending evil might ultimately be removed.

Until other and more distinct predictions had been made, the scheme of redemption was left, of course, in shadowy obscurity, and our unhappy parents knew not *how* all this could be, but they did not doubt God's word.

"I will put enmity,"—the Almighty says,—"*I will put enmity between thee and the woman.*" The inference is plain that such enmity did not exist before. Man, in his state of innocence, must have abhorred evil, and could have been on no terms of familiarity with the prince of darkness; but after the fall there was nothing to hinder

him from forming such an alliance. If this had been effectually accomplished, the ruin of the human family would have been complete.

God, however, whose righteous law had been broken, in tender pity for His disobedient children, "*put* enmity" between deceiver and deceived, and thus prepared the way for man's recovery from the fall.

All of us instinctively shrink back at the sight of a serpent. Indeed, many creatures far more dangerous are not regarded with half the aversion which is felt for the reptile chosen by the devil as the instrument for destroying the happiness of Paradise.

We do not stop to reason on the subject, and few may have even given it a moment's thought; but the disposition is found in all to destroy the reptile as it creeps across their path. In fulfilment of His own prediction, God has caused this aversion which is felt for the *agent* to extend to the *principal* himself; and enmity,—settled and undying enmity,—has been *put* between the devil and the descendants of our first parents.

It is true this enmity does not exist in each one of us to the same degree. In our unregenerate state we are only too willing to yield ourselves up to the devil's degrading service. It is God's grace alone which can make us loathe and shrink from it. Such enmity is *put* between all true Christians and the subtle foe who is watching to catch them off their guard.

We have not yet exhausted the meaning of the text,—
"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The idea conveyed by both clauses of this verse is that

of *hostility*. The degree of injury to be sustained by the respective parties is indicated by the terms *head* and *heel*. The *head* being the seat of life, the assailing and crushing it, express complete prostration of the adversary. The bruising of the *heel*, on the contrary, conveys the idea of a damage comparatively small.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is this "seed of the woman." He was born of a pure virgin, and not after the usual course of nature; and, in order that He might be the Redeemer of a sinful race, this must needs be so. Had He been a descendant from Adam, He must have inherited from him a corrupt nature, and been subject, like all other mortals, to the condemnation of the law.

During all the period of our Lord's life upon earth, we can not fail to notice the irreconcilable enmity which existed between Him and the prince of darkness. The very purpose of His coming into the world was "to destroy the works of the devil," and Satan labored no less industriously to frustrate the beneficent purposes of His manifestation in the flesh.

It was the devil who stirred up cruel Herod to murder the innocent children of Bethlehem, thus hoping to destroy Jesus. He tried to persuade Jesus to cast Himself down from the lofty pinnacle of the Temple, which he fancied would put an end to His career. It was Satan who prompted Judas to betray Him, and the chief priests to stain their hands with innocent blood. All the hindrances placed in the way of the progress of the Church of God are to be attributed to the same evil source.

Satan could touch the heel, but he could not reach the head of the Incarnate Son of God. When Jesus was

nailed to the cross, the enemy of our souls was bruising the heel of the Mediator; but his own head, which had plotted the diabolical mischief, was to be effectually crushed. By the very act of dying this cruel and shameful death, Jesus "*destroyed* him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14).

The return of each Christmas and Good Friday reminds us of this blessed truth. The words of our text are no longer a *prophecy*; they have been literally fulfilled.

"*The seed of the woman!*" What sublime honor to the mother of Jesus!

"Blessed among women is thy lot;
But higher meed we yield thee not,
Nor more than woman's name;
Nor solemn "Hail," to thee, we pay;
Nor prayer, to thee, for mercy pray;
Nor hymns of glory raise;
Nor thine, we deem, is God's high throne;
Nor thine, the birthright of thy Son,
The Mediator's praise."

Christ, our Saviour, has vanquished the prince of darkness; and the gates of Paradise are now opened wide to those who were once outcasts. We must, each one for himself, accept of Jesus as our Saviour, if we are to share in the results of His victory. May He who bruised the serpent's head, evermore put enmity between us and the cause of every mortal grief!

One dark night during the siege of Paris, a squad of French soldiers were quietly sent out to pick up the wounded, and to bring them safely within the ramparts. They were afraid to make any noise, lest they should be overheard by the enemy. So they called in an undertone,

and yet loud enough for the wounded to hear, "If there are any wounded, they will be brought into Paris, in the ambulances." From all sides came the earnest response of those who needed help.

Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer, the bruiser of the serpent's head, has sent forth His servants to gather into the wards of His great hospital, the Church, all those whom Satan has wounded and brought low; and these ministering servants only wait to hear the cry of those who are ready to perish.

SERMON V.

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

(*Christmas.*)

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."—II COR. ix. 15.

FOR long ages this joyful season of the Saviour's birth has been a favorite time when friends remembered one another in kindly gifts, and the poor and needy have had somewhat of brightness shed upon their cheerless lot.

Have you ever thought who it was that set the world an example in this regard? It was our Heavenly Father who presented *the first Christmas gift* to man, *the gift* which secures to us all other precious gifts, even the gift of His own dear Son to be our Saviour.

May all of us, both old and young, bear this in mind to-day, and say, with the sincerity and adoring reverence of holy Paul, "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!*"

All honor to the Holy Church, our honored mother, who has fulfilled, always and everywhere, her high duty as "witness and keeper" of revealed fact and doctrine, by uninterrupted anniversaries of the great events of Christian history. The true spirit of Christmas observance is that which sees in every thing that charms us in our civilization and social life, the power of the

coming and the life of the *Son of Man*, and finds a grateful satisfaction in glad homage for the benefit.

By a sort of verdict of acclamation, all orders and degrees of men, falling into the train of Christmas with hosannas and palm-branches, have pronounced approval of the words of Jesus, who "set a little child in the midst," and called him "greatest in the kingdom." Yet it was no *foundling*, but the welcome darling of a home!

From all the ends of the earth, goes up, this blessed Christmas Day, as one grand chorus, the apostle's heartfelt ejaculation: "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!*"

I. The Lord Jesus Christ is a *gift*, a *free* and *unmerited* gift, to sinful men.

Thrice happy they who so far appreciate this inestimable benefit as to be able to adopt the apostle's loving words: "The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave *Himself for me*" (Gal. ii. 20).

II. St. Paul calls this "*gift*" of God's own Son to be our Saviour, an "*unspeakable gift*."

"His love, what mortal thought can reach,
What mortal tongue display?
Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away!"

The Eternal Being gave Himself for the creatures His hands had made; gave Himself to poverty, to toil, humiliation, agony, and the cross. Aye, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

"For His blessed mother and St. John, for the Roman judge and for the Roman soldiers, for the chief priest

and for the Pharisee, for the vilest and hardest of His executioners, and for the thieves who hung dying beside Him, our Lord gave Himself to death" (Liddon).

We have all heard and read the gospel story, and we can bring Bethlehem and Calvary together,—the cradle and the cross.

"The associations of our Lord's nativity were all of the humblest character, and the very scenery of His birthplace was connected with memories of poverty and toil.

"On that night, indeed, it seemed as though the heavens must burst to disclose their radiant minstrelsies; but in the brief and thrilling verses of the evangelist we are not told that those angel songs were heard by any except the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village; and those shepherds, amid the chill dews of a winter night, were guarding their flocks in fields where Ruth, their Saviour's ancestress, had gleaned, and David, the despised and youngest son of a numerous family, had followed the ewes great with young" (Farrar).

Look in, at the open door of that stable, this blessed Christmas morning, and see in the gentle babe nestled in His mother's bosom, the Lamb for the future burnt-offering,—the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.

"The little tender hands shall yet be torn; these feet, that have not yet trod this rough earth, shall be nailed to the tree; that side shall yet be pierced by a Roman spear; that back shall be scourged; that cheek shall be buffeted and spit upon; that brow shall be crowned with thorns;—and all for you! Is not this love? Is it not the great love of God?" (Bonar.)

Can we refuse to exclaim as St. Paul did, from the ground of the heart, "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift?*"

On this Christmas Day was opened, in Bethlehem, the fountain of inexhaustible love; and its healing waters, in a clear and gushing stream, have ever since poured forth through all the parched earth. The good news of redemption have sounded abroad from the City of David, and all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of God.

Jacob's ladder, more glorious than he saw it in his midnight vision, is now firmly planted on the earth; angels flock down upon it, that they may minister to the heirs of salvation; and the inspired anthem sung by seraph bands above, is responded to by ransomed sinners here below: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

The memories of this holy time are fragrant beyond the sweetness of the living green which now beautifies the sanctuary of God, and makes the place of His feet glorious.

Our Divine Lord became "a little infant," says old St. Ambrose, "that thou mayest be able to be a perfect man. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, that thou mayest be freed from the bands of death. He was in earth, that thou mayest be in heaven. He preferred to be in want Himself, that all by Him might abound."

The most valuable present bestowed by a fellow-mortal, might as well not be given to us at all, unless we desire pleasure or profit from it.

So, too, with God's most precious gift, the gift of His Son to be our Saviour. If we *appreciate* the gift, we shall

be careful to *use* it. Our souls need cleansing day by day. This gift of God is a fountain for sin and uncleanness.

We are in constant peril, and long for some safe hiding-place. Christ Jesus is that *refuge*. We are often in bewilderment and distress. He will guide and comfort us. The soul is faint, and hope almost dies within us. His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.

No Christian is using God's gift aright, who turns his back on the King's banquet on this birthday of His Son.

A little Italian fruit-seller came into a lawyer's office, one day with a basket full of choice apples, and asked him to take one. He said he did not care for it, but she persisted, "You *must* take it." To put an end to her importunity he did as she desired. She came many times afterwards, when the same scene was acted over again. The gentleman well understood the reason. Years before, while sitting at his office table on a cold winter's day, he was startled by a piercing cry, and, rushing to the outer room, he saw the little apple-girl frantic with fear.

Standing too near to the red-hot stove, her light cotton dress had caught fire, and the flames were already mounting above her head. The clerks were too much confused and alarmed to render any help, when the lawyer rushed in, wrapped a blanket shawl about her, extinguished the flames, and saved her life.

An apple is not worth much; but when the child came back a few days after, and in broken English returned the thanks of her father and mother, and when, again and again, she brought the biggest and best apple her little stock afforded, the kind-hearted man had not the cruelty to refuse it.

The apple did not pay the price of her life; but it told, very plainly, the thankfulness of her heart.

The Divine Saviour, who came into this world on Christmas, to bless it for evermore, asks no *payment* for the love thus lavished on us; but He does find pleasure in the gratitude of His redeemed children, and He affords us the privilege of expressing it.

In the earnestness of our prayers and praises, in our humble devotion at the Blessed Sacrament, in the alms and oblations laid upon His altar, may He find the most real and acceptable adoption on our part, of the spirit of St. Paul, in the text: "*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!*"

SERMON VI.

INFANT MARTYRS.

(Festival of the Holy Innocents.)

“Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”—ST. MATT. ii. 18.

LE BRUNE, in his voyage to Syria, describes the women of the East as going in companies, on certain days, to the tombs of their departed relatives, to weep there. “While I was at Ramah,” he says, “I saw a number of them, who went out of the town, and I followed them. They first seated themselves on the sepulchres and wept there, and then, having remained there about half an hour, some of them rose up and formed a ring, holding each other by the hand. Quickly two of them quitted the others and placed themselves in the centre of the circle, where they made so much noise, as might have subjected themselves to the suspicion of madness. After that they returned, and seated themselves to weep again, till they gradually withdrew to their homes.”

And so this old custom has been kept up there, through all the ages since our dear Saviour’s birth.

The beautiful Festival of the Holy Innocents is unlike any other, since it is observed in honor of little children,—little children who were martyrs in the cause of Christ.

The Church pays due respect to three classes of mar-

tyrs. In the first rank, we have St. Stephen, who was a martyr in both will and deed. Next comes St. John, who was a martyr in will, although not in deed; and lastly, the little children at Bethlehem, who, while of too tender age to exercise any thought in the matter, were, in fact, martyrs for their infant Saviour.

As the first of that great company of "the noble army of martyrs," springing up like the earliest blossoms in the cold, dismal winter, they were a token of the rich abundance of sufferers for the cause of Jesus, who should come after.

The class which they represent,—those who suffer in deed, but not in will,—is very numerous, in every season of trial and persecution. Children, like these sweet, innocent babes of Bethlehem, or grown-up people, who are put to death without the possibility of escape, thousands slain in indiscriminate massacres, who are accepted by our gracious Saviour as having died for His sake.

For the better understanding of what is to follow, it will be well to remind you that there are three Herods whose names occupy a prominent place in New Testament history.

Herod the Great was the son of a crafty and wealthy Edomite, who, by skilful management, secured for him the chief command in Galilee; and Herod, by his own political sagacity, won the good opinion of Cassius and Mark Antony, and was proclaimed king of the Jews.

Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea when his father's death made it necessary to divide his kingdom. It was this Herod who is so often mentioned during the public ministry of our blessed Lord, and who gratified the wicked

caprice of a dancing girl and her abandoned mother, by the murder of John the Baptist.

The third ruler who bore the name of Herod was a grandson of Herod the Great, and was known as Herod Agrippa. Standing high in favor with the authorities at Rome, he was invested with royal dignity, and ruled over the wide-spread dominion which had once been under the sway of his grandfather.

Herod Agrippa figures in the Acts of the Apostles as the cruel persecutor of the Church, and his terrible death is described by St. Luke, in the twelfth chapter.

It was during the last year of the reign of Herod the Great (the first of the three Herods), that our blessed Lord was born. Bold, and yet prudent, oppressive, and yet profuse, this monarch possessed many of the characteristics of a popular hero; his ostentatious display, and even his arbitrary tyranny, being calculated to inspire the Orientals with reverence and awe.

Herod the Great was a sort of "Blue Beard," in his way, having married ten wives.

A lingering and painful disease so maddened him during his last years, that he shut up some of the principal Jews in the Hippodrome, at Jericho, giving strict orders, that, as soon as he breathed his last, they should be put to death, that there might be no lack of mourners at his funeral (Josephus, Ant., xvii. 6, 5).

Herod had long aroused Jewish prejudice and suspicion, by the encouragement he gave to pagan games and pastimes, and his court became the centre of dissension and distrust.

These facts explain the nervous excitement and uneasiness which he manifested when the wise men from

the East came to Jerusalem, diligently inquiring for the new-born King of the Jews, whose appearance had been heralded by a star.

A long life devoted to political intrigues had made him so perfect in duplicity, that the learned Persians suspected no mischief when Herod said to them, in his blandest tones, as they set off for Bethlehem, "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also!"

As Bethlehem was only six miles off, he must have waited impatiently for their return; but no sooner did he learn that the strangers, having paid homage to the infant Saviour, had hastened back to their own country another way, than his chagrin and indignation burst forth.

A monster of cruelty, like Herod, who could sacrifice his wife's grandfather, his wife herself, and three of his own sons, to his insane suspicions, would not quietly brook a rival king of the Jews, even though that rival was a helpless infant, and he a man who had passed his seventieth birthday, and who could not have long to live.

The prophetic voice of the Psalmist had foretold it all: "The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed" (Ps. ii. 2).

Herod reproaches himself for stupidity in not having sent his own trusty servants to search for the infant King at Bethlehem, instead of relying upon the strangers from the far-off East, and now resolves that his bloody bandits shall make sure work. What he proposed to do must be done quickly and by stealth.

"In so small a village as Bethlehem, and in the thinly settled population which lay around it, there could be but a few male infants under two years old. It is but one of the dreams of the middle-age imagination, which has swelled the numbers of the slaughtered to thousands; one or two dozens would be nearer to the mark. A few practiced hands, such as Herod could easily secure, would have little difficulty in finishing their work in the course of one forenoon. The unprotected homes lay open, and before any concerted resistance could be offered, half the children might be slain. Secretly, promptly, vigorously as his measures were taken, they came too late. An eye more vigilant than his was watching over the safety of the infant Jesus" (Hanna).

Herod's measures were as unsuccessful as they were monstrous. Joseph, being warned by God in a dream, lost not an hour in making good his escape into Egypt with the blessed Virgin and her Son.

The heart-rending cries of the bereaved mothers, lamenting for their murdered babes, seem sounding in our ears.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (St. Matt. ii. 17, 18).

These words received an immediate fulfilment when the descendants of Rachel who were being carried away captive to Babylon, were led past her tomb (Jeremiah xl. 1). She whom Jacob had buried "In the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Gen. xxxv. 19), was then, by a beautiful poetic figure, said to weep passionately

for her offspring, because she beheld them taken from her.

The prediction of Jeremiah (xxxi. 15) was still more strikingly fulfilled in the days of the gospel, when the Holy Innocents were so cruelly slaughtered.

We need not suppose that the mothers of Bethlehem were aware that the murder of their babes was thus accomplishing an ancient prophecy; and very likely they died in utter ignorance of the honor conferred upon them.

The cheering light of the gospel sheds brightness even on this bloody page of sacred history; for, if it be a glorious thing to suffer for Christ's sake, surely the portion of both mothers and children was glorious, who were thus called to suffer for His Name.

These slaughtered Innocents died for Jesus, in order to live for Him. He lived for them, that He might, in due time, suffer and die for them.

"The infant Saviour has infant martyrs! Thus, children are held up to our admiration from the very first, in their deaths as in their lives, a pattern to older Christians (St. Matt. xviii. 2).

"These mothers of Bethlehem must have thought themselves supremely miserable, the most afflicted of God's creatures; but they little knew their blessedness! Their murdered Innocents evermore lead the van in 'the noble army of martyrs,' and are honored by the Church's yearly festival which bears their name" ("Plain Commentary on Holy Gospels").

Although not old enough to confess Christ, with the mouth, as we may, yet were they permitted to die for Him.

The same merciful Saviour who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," and who "took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them," doubtless received these child martyrs, "gave them the blessing of eternal life" in exchange for this short and changing one, and "made them partakers of His everlasting kingdom."

The mothers of Bethlehem endured their life-long grief, perhaps, but when it came their turn to die, they must have recognized, with rapture, their own murdered Innocents, among the bright army of martyrs and confessors, who had gone before into the peaceful realms of bliss.

Prudentius, a Christian poet of the fourth century, of Spanish parentage, wrote a beautiful little address, in classic Latin, to these infant sufferers for their Lord, which may thus be expressed in our English tongue.

"Hail, ye first flowers of the evangelical spring, cut off by the sword of persecution ere yet you had unfolded your leaves to the morning, as the early rose droops before the withering blast. Driven like a flock of lambs to the slaughter, you have the honor to compose the first sacrifice offered at the altar of Christ; before which, methinks, I see your innocent simplicity sporting with the palms and the crowns held out to you from above."

In the portion of Holy Scripture appointed for the epistle on "Innocent's Day," the veil is rent in twain, which divides this world from the next, and we behold the Heavenly Mount, and the great multitude who stand about the throne, and about the Lamb. "These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no

guile, for they were without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. xiv. 4, 5).

Besides the use made of the collect for this day, on the yearly return of the festival, we have often joined in it at the funerals of little children: "Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy Name."

God grant that the beautiful prayer may be answered!

SERMON VII.

NO ROOM FOR JESUS.

(Sunday after Christmas.)

“There was no room for them in the inn.”—ST. LUKE ii., part of 7th verse.

ST. LUKE'S is sometimes called the gospel of painting, because of its lifelike sketches and its brilliant coloring. It may be quite as fittingly described as the gospel of poetry.

The manger at Bethlehem, the Virgin and Child, the Christmas song of the angels, the arrival of the shepherds, the swanlike song of Simeon, these, and many other scenes which you will readily call to mind, are portrayed with rhythmic bursts and choral vibrations.

One short mile from Bethlehem is a little plain, in which, under a grove of olives, stands a rude chapel, built over the traditional spot where the shepherds watched their flocks by night or the first Christmas Eve, and where they rejoiced at the glad tidings brought to them from heaven.

From their humble home in Nazareth, Joseph, the carpenter, has made his way along the wintry road, with Mary, his espoused wife.

The distance was eighty miles, and they are taking the toilsome journey in obedience to a command of the emperor Augustus, who had ordered a census to be made of the province of Palestine.

Jewish custom required that each family should be enrolled in its own native city; and, fallen as were the temporal fortunes of Joseph and Mary, they both were descended from the kingly race of David; and the village of Bethlehem, to which we see them journeying now, was once the home of their great ancestor while a ruddy shepherd boy watching his flocks upon the lonely hills.

The caravansera of the little village was then, as in modern times, a low structure of rough stones, consisting of a square enclosure in which the cattle could be fastened up for the night, and an arched recess where travellers might spread their mats.

Devoid of privacy and comfort as such arrangements were, they were eagerly sought; and, on great public occasions, it was only the first-comers who were sure of being accommodated at all.

Other travellers had easily passed the poor peasants on the way; and when, after toiling up the steep hillside by David's well, they reached the khan, they found every part of it already full. "*There was no room for them in the inn.*"

In the rude limestone grotto attached to the caravansera was a stable, and among the hay and straw scattered on the ground for the cattle, the Saviour of the world was born.

The gentle babe, in His mother's sheltering arms, is He whom the heaven of heavens can not contain; and, instead of the royal purple, He is arrayed in the swaddling clothes of poverty.

"Words are weak, and thought fails, and can no more embrace what is infinite in the Divine compassions, than

what is infinite in the Divine greatness. Even animal nature seems to partake of the overflowings of the same; it is in a stable, and sacred antiquity has represented the ass and the ox as present there" (Isaac Williams).

The season of the taxing corresponded exactly with the date of our Lord's nativity; and thus the official return of those who belonged to Bethlehem, treasured up among the imperial archives of Rome, became documentary evidence of the most important fact in the world's history.

Hence, it comes to pass that, although so many ages have since rolled by, there is no uncertainty as to the time of the Saviour's birth, and Christians have always kept it with songs of joy and thankfulness.

We can picture for ourselves the gatekeeper of Bethlehem shaking his head, when Joseph and Mary passed in, on the evening of the twenty-fourth of December, as if to say, "No room for such as you. The rich and great have gone in before you, and you must seek shelter where you can!"

Whether the gatekeeper thought this or not, thus certainly it was to be; and we can not but feel both amazed and shocked, that the Virgin Mother, in her hour of greatest need, was forced to take refuge in the humble spot where the ox and the ass found shelter.

The Virgin Mother and the holy Child! What mysterious ties bound them to each other! In that awful hour, at Bethlehem, "there must have mingled with the sorrows of the outcast Virgin the trembling joys of one who knew herself the superhuman channel of the hope of the human race; and as she gazed upon that eternal Child in whom was bound up the regeneration of Israel,

of the world, 'her soul could magnify the Lord,' and her spirit rejoice in God her Saviour!" (Archer Butler.)

Whoever those persons may have been who turned so coldly and selfishly away from Joseph and Mary on that memorable December night, although they could not help seeing that they were cold, weary, and hungry, yet we must say this for them, that they did not know they were thus robbing the Son of the Highest of the honor due unto Him, when He came, in great humility, to visit this far-off region of His wide-spread dominions.

Now that these wonderful events are made facts of history, we readily see them in their true light; and many well-disposed Christians have said within themselves, "Had *we* been dwellers in Bethlehem on that first Christmas Eve, Joseph and Mary should have shared with us in all we could offer them. Our roof should have covered them, and they should have found a welcome at our table!"

I believe you are perfectly sincere in supposing that you would have been very kind and hospitable to these humble peasants of Galilee, but before you settle it in your minds that you would assuredly have done so, it will be quite as well to test yourselves in a plain, matter-of-fact way.

There is such a thing, even now, as having no room for Christ, and treating Him, with as much indifference and contempt as if the door of a comfortable inn had been rudely barred against Him, and obliged Him to find refuge in a stable.

Here is one, devoted to Christ by the solemn vows of baptism and confirmation, who has no stated times each day, for studying God's holy word, and for secret prayer.

I do not accuse him of always neglecting these duties; but he gives them the go-by with cool indifference, if he happens to be in unusual haste to get to his place of business, or if he reaches home weary at night. He can find time, and make time, for all things else; but, unless perfectly convenient to himself, he has no room for his Saviour.

There is another Christian, the father of a family, with children and servants looking up to him for advice and wholesome example. He has room for every thing else in his house but the family altar.

That man would have turned away from Joseph and Mary, had they come, toilworn and fainting to his door; aye, it would have occasioned him little concern, had this refusal to extend hospitality to the poor strangers left the holy Child Jesus to be cradled in a manger.

Again, in the disposal of their money, how many Christians are acting the part of the thoughtless people at Bethlehem, when the inn was closed against those who so greatly needed its shelter. There are thousands of Church-members whose tables, even in times of dire distress, are loaded to the degree of wasteful abundance, who can find means to keep pace with the most absurd and fantastic freaks of fashion, and, in short, never know the meaning of self-denial, and who, when the Lord Jesus comes to them in the person of His ministers, and claims His lawful tenth for the work of His kingdom, leave His servants to make brick, when no straw has been provided.

Multitudes of young persons who were consecrated to God in infancy, and who have renewed the vows of baptism, in confirmation, have no room for Jesus in their hearts; refusing to obey His dying commandment to

partake of the holy communion, and who are living as unmindful of their obligations as if He had no claim upon them, and they were expecting no favors at His hands.

Is Jesus, whose coming in the flesh brought so much happiness into the world, such an intruder upon our joys, and is the thought of Him such a damper upon the mind of youth, that, in the happy hours of early life, no room should be found for Him?

Ah! beloved, whether you be young or old, how shall you face Him in heaven, for whom you found no room on earth? No room for Christ Jesus, the only Saviour!

In a moment when you least expect it, the door of eternity will swing open, and unseen messengers of the Most High will lead you in. One of two receptions awaits you. A crown of glory will be the reward of your faithfulness unto death, or fiends of darkness will be ready to greet you as the sharer of their misery.

It may be some very small neglect (as you account such things) which will settle your future lot.

A man who had long carried an old and cherished watch, one day called on the maker of it, and told him that it was of no sort of use to him, as it had ceased to keep correct time.

"Let me examine it," said the jeweller; and taking a powerful glass, he carefully inspected the works, until he spied one very minute grain of sand.

"I have it," he said. "I can get over your difficulty."

At this moment, by some unseen power, the little grain seemed to baffle the watchmaker's skill, and say, "Let me alone! I am but a small thing, and take up so little room that I can not possibly injure the watch. Twenty or thirty of us might do harm, but I can not."

The persistent watchmaker thought otherwise, and kept on with his task, until the single small grain was removed.

There will be no acceptable service of God, so long as even one known, habitual sin is left unsubdued. Jesus can find no room in a divided heart.

“O Jesus, Thou art pleading,
In accents meek and low,
‘I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat Me so?’

“O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door;
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave us *nevermore!*”

SERMON VIII.

NEW YEAR'S CONSECRATION.

(Feast of the Circumcision.)

"Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord."—EXODUS xxxii., part of 29th verse.

It has been well said, that the strongest man in all the world is a consecrated man. In the old Roman wars with Pyrrhus, we have a remarkable story of self-devotion. There was an oracle which said that victory would attend that army whose leader should give himself up to death. Decius, the Roman Consul, having heard of this, rushed into the thickest of the fight, that his own death might secure the victory for his side. The prodigies of valor which he performed are proofs of the power of consecration.

The whole track of history, whether recording the events in Church or State, is made bright and glorious by the names of those who have devoted their lives to the accomplishment of some great end.

On this opening of a fresh page in our own lives, the New Year's resolution of every thoughtful person should be, "I will try my best, from this day forward, to do good in my generation, and to leave a blessing behind me."

To *live* well is quite as much to be thought of as to *die* well. Even when one has not been successful in

the thing he sought to accomplish, it may really be set down to his credit that he has failed. "Ill success sometimes arises from a superabundance of qualities in themselves good, from a conscience too sensitive, a taste too fastidious, a self-forgetfulness too romantic, a modesty too retiring. These are heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the triumphs" (George S. Hillard).

Looking upon things, on this New Year's morning, in a plain, matter-of-fact way, and bearing in mind that very much of their lives has already been lived by some, and nearly all of it has been spent by others, it is wise in us to ask, What ought we to do under this state of the case? No better advice could possibly be given than that of the text: "*Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord.*"

As the vessels of the tabernacle, in the olden time, the victims for the sacrifices, and the three orders of the priesthood, were devoted, in a solemn way, to their holy uses; so ought we, by personal consecration to God, to surrender ourselves to His service. In such a consecration there should be no reservation nor half-heartedness, but a sincere dedication of heart and life to Him. It should apply to all places, and seasons, and circumstances. This consecration to God's service does not conflict, in the least degree, with a diligent and successful pursuit of worldly business, nor the discharge of the highest claims of official position.

As prime minister of England, Mr. Gladstone found time to attend most strictly to his religious duties; and, from the promptings of a generous heart, he built and endowed a church.

I have always admired the practical good sense of

the member of the Connecticut Assembly in colonial days. The progress of business was suddenly stopped, at mid-day, by overwhelming darkness, and consternation seized upon the delegates. One of them sprang to his feet and cried out, in terror, that the Day of Judgment had come, and proposed that they should instantly adjourn. This motion would, no doubt, have prevailed, had not a member of less excitable temperament quietly remarked that the Day of Judgment had either come, or it had not come. "If it *has* come," he continued, "I prefer to be found here, attending to the public business, which has brought us together; and, if it has *not* come, we owe it to those who sent us here, not to waste our time. I, therefore, move, Mr. Speaker, that the candles be instantly sent for, and that we go on with our work."

And so the minister of God calls upon you, at this beginning of the New Year, to "Consecrate yourselves" to Him, by doing your duty in that state of life to which, in His providence, you have been called.

The man who is really consecrated to God will be high-minded and honorable, and will neither lie nor cheat. His weights and measures will be in strict accordance with the legal standard, and his word will be as good as his bond.

The consecrated man will shun gluttony no less than drunkenness, and will enjoy the good things of life in moderation, and with a thankful heart. Moreover, he will always rejoice to be useful; and, instead of shutting his eyes to the miseries of the world, he will do all in his power to remove them.

Every position in life, no matter how high or how low, will afford opportunities for doing good.

Madame Dalencourt, who was brought up in a convent, and who is most devout and conscientious in the practice of her religion, wrote, in June, 1879: "My dearly-loved brother, Lieutenant Bellot, who died in the Arctic Seas, in the search of Sir John Franklin, had written in his journal half in English, half in French; and I heard it whispered that he had in his two voyages, fallen into the habit of reading the Bible, and that he delighted in it, and even conducted service for the crew, who listened to him with edification!"

This single illustration will suggest to any one anxious to do his duty, abundant occasions for enrolling himself among the active workers for lifting up those that are down, and for giving light to such as sit in darkness. In order to this, it is by no means necessary that every reformed drunkard should set up as a temperance lecturer, or every actor who has proved a failure on the stage, should take refuge in the pulpit.

Again, the consecrated man or woman will carry a consecrated purse. "Not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth," will be their motto.

Years ago, while on a visit to New York, wishing to bring home a tempting tid-bit for my school of poor children, I called at the store of Alexander Stewart, on the corner of Chambers and Greenwich Streets, and found it a bee-hive of active industry. On the morning of his seventieth birthday, this good man has just passed away. Industry and integrity had enabled him to accumulate a large estate; but as he had consecrated himself to God, his money was included in the solemn act. His enormous gains were on no grander scale than his munificent benefactions. Although avoiding all publicity in these

matters, it is well known that his contributions to missions, in a single year, have amounted to fifty thousand dollars.

Comparatively few are able to devise liberal things after this fashion; but there can be no doubt that most Christians would be happier in their religion, and even more prosperous in their worldly affairs, if they were careful to render unto the Lord His lawful tithes.

Finally, in calling upon you, on the return of the New Year, to "Consecrate yourselves to the Lord," I beg you to notice, that we are told in the text to do it "*to-day*." The day of grace, of hope, and of opportunities for usefulness, will soon be followed by night,—the night of sickness, the night of infirm old age, the night of death, when no man can work.

If we will but "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly" before God, we shall be fulfilling our whole duty in this life, and be fitted for the blessedness of that which is to come.

SERMON IX.

THE LOVELINESS OF CHRIST.

(Second Sunday after Christmas.)

“He is altogether lovely.”—SONG OF SOLOMON v., part of 16th verse.

EVEN on this Second Sunday after Christmas there is a lingering glow of brightness which gladdens the world, and we seem to hear the far-off echoes of the angels’ song, when they came to herald the Saviour’s birth.

None need be impatient at our remaining near the manger-cradle of Jesus. We shall soon enough be called upon to behold Him as the Man of Sorrows, and one acquainted with human griefs.

There is a curious legend which relates, that while our blessed Lord bore his heavy cross along the Via Dolorosa, which led to Calvary, a devout woman who followed after, wiped His agonized face with her handkerchief, and that the cloth became miraculously impressed with His holy image.

Simple and absurd as this legend may appear, it shows the yearning of the Christian heart for some portraiture of Him who was “fairer than the children of men,” and “altogether lovely.”

In the dreary Catacombs, where the Christians, who dwelt in Pagan Rome, hid themselves from their perse-

cutors, Jesus is painted as the Good Shepherd in the midst of His flock, or as seeking for the wandering sheep. It will be needless, however, to trace the progress of Christian Art in its vain attempts to portray the image of the world's Redeemer. "Every soul that sees Jesus by faith, is saved thereby. If I look to Christ with a bleared eye that is ever so weak and clouded with tears, and if I only catch a glimpse of Him through clouds and mists, yet the sight saves me. But who will remain content with such a poor gleam of glory as that? No, let my eyes be cleansed, till I can see my Lord as He is seen by His bosom friends" (Spurgeon).

Solomon assures us, in the text, that "*He is altogether lovely.*"

Unless we regard the book of Canticles in its allegorical application to Christ and His Church, no spiritual end would be gained by allowing it even a subordinate place in the Bible.

Carrying out the conceptions of that early day as to personal beauty, and splendor, the portrait drawn in the Song of Solomon furnishes us with a perfect model of a prince. Translating it from the earthly to the spiritual, it witnesses, in a very striking way, to the transcendent glories of the Divine Redeemer, as He appeared in vision to the beloved disciple in Patmos (Rev. i. 12-16).

The sweet Psalmist of Israel touched the same harmonious chord, when he sang in rapturous strain, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; full of grace are Thy lips" (xlv. 2).

The appropriateness of the description given of the Saviour in the text, appears,

I. First, *in the spotless purity of His nature.*

Jesus was without moral infirmity or blemish. He was holy, and separate from sinners; the complete embodiment of Divine perfection. Both soul and body were free from the taint of sin, and His countenance the most lovely and benignant ever seen by mortal eye. "In human beings there never is an approach to sustained, proportioned, and universal goodness. The manifestation in one direction is so high as to be unnatural, while in another direction it falls below the standard of our conceptions. Jesus of Nazareth always is, and acts up to the idea of perfect humanity; nothing is artificial, nothing assumed, nothing forced; but we behold the natural, honest, free development of a true soul. Wherever He is, and however placed,—in the ordinary circumstances of His daily life, or at the Last Supper, or in the judgment hall, or on Calvary,—He is the same meek, pure, wise, Godlike Being" (Young's "Christ in History").

II. Again, our adorable Saviour was "altogether lovely" in *His unrivalled perfections*. In addition to all the faculties and powers of man,—and that, too, in the highest degree,—He possessed the illustrious perfections of the Godhead.

The natural and moral attributes of the Almighty Father, belonged also to the Eternal Son. Omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, infinite wisdom, boundless mercy, and unchanging faithfulness,—these were the attributes of Christ. Is it any wonder, then, that, whether in life or in death, the followers of Jesus can trust in Him?

A plain man, with few advantages of education, was undergoing an examination with a view to his being set apart for a humble sphere of Christian work. When he was asked to name some of the evidences of our Lord's

divinity, the candidate looked perplexed, and gave no answer.

"What reason have you for believing that Jesus was divine?" again inquired the examiner.

"How do I know that Jesus is divine?"

"Yes," responded the examiner.

The man's eyes filled with tears. He sprang to his feet, and stretching out his arms, cried out, in a tone of grateful triumph, "Why, bless you, sir, He saved my soul!"

III. Again, our Blessed Lord was "altogether lovely" in *His varied offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.*

He was the anointed Priest of the whole human family, in whom the offices both of Prophet and Great High Priest were brought together; and the sacrifice which He offered was so ample and complete, that there *need* be, and there *can* be, no more sacrifice for sin.

We are not saved by the simple fact that Christ Jesus came into the world, but because He became our Substitute, the Sin-bearer of the guilty. He redeemed us to God by His blood, and, hence, the seraphic song of the blessed, "To Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!"

The well-known authoress, Charlotte Elizabeth, numbered among her friends a poor deaf mute, who had very sublime ideas of God and of the Divine Redeemer, whom he fancied he saw once, in a vision, and whom he always reverently spoke of as the "Red Right Hand." He thought he beheld a great multitude standing up before God to be judged, and that the Almighty One opened a book, and looked at the top of the pages until He came to the name of the deaf-and-dumb man. The

page seemed to be crowded with the enumeration of his sins, but when the Eternal Judge began to read the list, behold, there was nothing to read! Our dear Lord and Saviour had passed His bleeding hand over the black catalogue of sins, and they were remembered no more.

Even so will Christ Jesus "blot out the hand-writing" (Col. ii. 14) against each one of us, if we, in sincerity of heart, will take up His cross and strive to follow Him.

The Saviour is, however, more than a Prophet and a High Priest, He is also the King of Righteousness and Peace.

His glorious kingdom is spiritual, and designed to leaven the whole world. No king is so rich, so powerful, so gracious as He, "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," and on His vesture and on His thigh is written the lofty title, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The palace of Versailles, with its countless representations of battles, sieges, stormings, and surprises, is dedicated, as we read in an inscription on its walls, "*To the glories of France!*"

In marked contrast with these empty tokens of vain ambition are the glories displayed in Christ's spiritual palace, His holy Church, consecrated to the triumphs of the Prince of peace!

All of us who have been baptized have been enrolled as soldiers in the grand army of our King, and He is looking for true and laudable service at our hands. He has had a great multitude of brave men and women, and devoted children, who have endured poverty, and reproach, and death, for His sake; and, thank God, the chivalric spirit which animated the Church of old has

not quite died out, even in these days of coldness and spiritual decay.

IV. Once more, the declaration of the text that the Redeemer is "altogether lovely," is true *when applied to His temper and spirit*. Love, meekness, tenderness, and benignity marked His whole earthly career. He not only had a tender, sympathizing heart, but He could be "touched," aye, so deeply touched by the sight of misery that He "went about doing good" (Acts x. 38). A whole volume of self-sacrificing service is summed up in that single line.

"Indefatigable, inexhaustible, unconquerable in love! Was it for a few sick folk in Galilee or in Judea that this was done? The widow's son, and Jarius' daughter, and Mary's brother, Lazarus? A publican or harlot now and then; a dozen or a score of fishermen; the hundred and twenty, or 'five hundred,' at the most, who owned Him in the flesh? No; but for every age, and all the world, long as the Church shall last, far as the Church shall spread; leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (Bishop Doane).

Thus, for a few minutes, we have turned our thoughts to the portraiture of our blessed Redeemer, "altogether lovely" in the spotless purity of His nature, in His unrivalled perfections, in His varied offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, and in His temper and spirit; but we are expected to do something more than admire these evidences of His perfection. He is to be our pattern and exemplar. The very idea of our becoming, in any great degree, like this model of perfection would be disheartening indeed, did we not remember this fact, that He who is our *pattern*, is also our Saviour.

The laver which stood in the temple at Jerusalem was made of brass; in this the priests washed their feet whenever they offered sacrifices; so does Christ purify us from sin; but the tradition is that this laver was made of very bright brass, and acted as a mirror; so that as often as the priests came to it, they could see their own spots in it.

In like manner, when we who do worthily deserve to be punished for our misdoings, behold Jesus, "Who is altogether lovely," we recognize in Him One who can cleanse us from our sins, and we are animated with an anxious desire to become more and more like Him, in purity and holiness. We acknowledge the kindness shown us by our fellow-creatures, by endeavoring to avoid what we think would give them pain, and by doing such things as would please them. On the same principle we should ask of our adorable Lord, to whom we owe so much, "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?"

The biographer of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, relates, that in the Lord Jesus Christ he found, "in faultless perfection, all he sought in an earthly friend. His eye went across the intervening ages to look into the eyes of the Saviour; he saw there that wisdom which silenced the gainsayer, that love which beamed through tears upon the weeping sisters at the grave of Lazarus; he seemed to grasp the hand which supported Peter among the waves."

Let all of us who claim to be followers of the same Divine Master, be so conformed to His will, that we, also, may be partakers of the riches of His grace!

SERMON X.

CHRISTIANS CAUSING THEIR LIGHT TO SHINE.

(*Epiphany.*)

“Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!”—ISAIAH lx. 1.

Nor long after the birth of our blessed Lord on Christmas, while Joseph and Mary still lingered in Bethlehem, the Eastern strangers whom we know as the “wise men,” came to Jerusalem, anxiously seeking for the new-born King.

In their native Persia, under the twofold character of priests and diviners, they possessed great power, and the education of royalty was entrusted to them.

As these Magi were watching the stars, one December night, in their cloudless sky, a wonderfully brilliant orb attracted their notice; and they rightly interpreted it to be a sign that the Divine Deliverer, so long promised to the world, had come.

A deputation of their number followed it to the westward, as it went lantern-like before them on their way. The strange star led them towards the kingdom of Judea, and then it seems to have vanished from their sight.

Left thus, in a maze of perplexity, they turned their steps to Jerusalem, expecting to find the inhabitants of

the capital paying enthusiastic homage to the infant King.

To their amazement, no one had heard of the important event; and when the tidings which they brought, reached Herod's jealous ears, the high court of the Sanhedrim was hurriedly called together, and Jerusalem was thrown into a ferment.

The Scribes, who carefully studied the ancient prophecies, informed the Eastern sages, that the promised Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and thither the strangers went.

Had they tarried in the unbelieving city, hoping to receive more light, or had they turned the incredulity of the Jewish people into a plausible excuse for doubt, the long journey which they had made would have been all to no purpose.

No sooner had they started for Bethlehem than the star once more appeared, and steadily moved onward before them.

They reached the little decayed city of David, when the star stood still over a humble dwelling, which they hesitated not to enter.

Instead of a monarch surrounded by his royal guards and ministers of state, they behold, to their astonishment, a mother of very humble appearance, and a sweet gentle babe, clad in the garb of poverty.

They had come from a distant land where innocence had never been accounted sacred, and where no special honor was paid to defenceless woman; and here, under the form of womanhood and childhood, they were called to worship the promise of better days to come, when peace should inherit the earth, and righteousness should

look down from heaven. In spite of the humble surroundings of the infant Jesus, the Eastern sages bowed the knee before Him, much more humbly than they had done to haughty Herod, or to the despotic rulers of Persia; aye, they worshipped Him, and presented unto Him their costliest gifts.

Besides the common name, *Epiphany*, or *Manifestation*, by which this festival, for ages, has been known, it was called by the early Christians, *the Day of the Holy Lights*, as being the time when they commemorated the baptism of our blessed Lord, who then became a light to those who sat in darkness. For the same reason the festival of the Epiphany has also been a favorite occasion for the administration of this important sacrament.

It is in connection with this name of the Epiphany, *the Feast of Lights*, that the language of the prophet, in the text, appears so significant and beautiful: "*Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!*"

The lights of heaven, in their order, are all applied by the sacred writers, to magnify our conceptions of God's power, and the glory of His everlasting kingdom. The Psalmist describes the Almighty One, as "A sun and a shield" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11); a sun to give light to His people, and a shield to protect them from harm.

Christ Jesus is represented as the "*Sun of righteousness*" (Malachi iv. 2); who, as the sun in the firmament causes all nature to rejoice, so does the Saviour usher in the acceptable year of the Lord, and restore all things in the kingdom of grace.

I. Our attention is first attracted by *the tidings announced in the text: "Thy light is come."*

This language is very significant, when we remember that Jesus said of Himself, at the beginning of His public ministry, "*I am the Light of the world!*" (St. John viii. 12.)

The apostle, also, declared concerning Him, that He was "*the brightness of the Father's glory*" (Heb. i. 3).

What a wonderful thing is light! In its nature, incomprehensible; itself the first visible, and that by which all other things are seen, it serves as a fit emblem of our Divine Lord, "Whose generation none can declare," but who must shine upon us, before we can know anything aright.

As light remains in its unsullied purity, although penetrating to the most noisome recesses of the earth, so did Christ Jesus, "*the true Light,*" contract no stain of sin, when born in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Moreover, as light is all-important in the processes of vegetation, so that without its life-giving power, the earth would be a dead and unproductive waste, so does light typify that Divine Source of all illumination, concerning whom, St. John declares, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (St. John i. 4).

Faint, struggling beams of brightness had indeed burst through mist and cloud during the older dispensations, while the world was waiting in impatience for the day when "a star should rise out of Jacob" (Num. xxiv. 17), and the Son of God, revealed to believing hearts, as the Babe of Bethlehem, should prove to be, "*the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (St. John i. 9).

After the first Epiphany the light of Divine Truth was no longer to shine on one favored people only;

and old Simeon spoke by the spirit of inspiration when, standing in the Temple at Jerusalem, from whose portals all except the Jews had thus far been shut out, he spoke of the Son of Mary, as one born to be "*A Light to lighten the Gentiles*," as well as "the glory of His people Israel" (St. Luke ii. 32).

While Christ Jesus, the true Light, "shines in the darkness," and the darkness does not receive it (St. John i. 5), it is His Body, the Church, and not the unbelieving world, which is lighted up at His glorious appearing.

II. Accordingly, the prophet, in the text, says of Zion, and of her only, "*Thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!*"

During the continuance of the Jewish dispensation the day *began* to dawn, and, in the hearts of some who were looking, in faith, for the Redeemer, the "Day Star" may be said to have "arisen" (II Pet. i. 19); yet it was only after the manifestation of our blessed Lord, on the Epiphany, and during the period of His ministration upon earth, that the Sun appeared above the horizon, and sent forth beams of glory through all lands. Darkness flees before Him, and "unto those that fear His name," whether Jews or Gentiles, "does the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in His beams" (Malachi iv. 2).

Light is the emblem of happiness, of knowledge, and of holiness; and such are the blessings which Christ imparts to His people.

There *are* times when individual Christians withdraw themselves, through the corrupting influences of sin, from the sweet and cheering light of the Lord; and even the

Church may, now and then, pass under a cloud, and be partially obscured; but the eclipse will be only for a brief season.

The Lord Jesus is so closely united to His people, that, while He remains with them and they are satisfied to walk in His light, they lose, in a degree, their earth stains, and are radiant in His infinite holiness.

III. The glad announcement made to Zion in the text, that her glorious Light had come, *was designed to exert a practical effect on the daily conduct of her children.* "*Arise, shine!*" or, as the word is rendered in the margin of our English Bible, "*be enlightened.*"

While evil-doers persist in "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (St. John iii. 19), God's children shall "*arise and be enlightened.*"

How earnestly ought we who, through His abundant mercy, have been brought into "the marvellous light" of the gospel, to beseech our Heavenly Father that He would "shine into our hearts" more and more, to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory, "in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iv. 6).

IV. Once more, Christians are reminded in the text that, if faithful to their holy calling, *they will "shine as lights in the world"* (Philip. ii. 15).

As the sun in the heavens irradiates the stars, which are brightened by a lustre derived from him, so ought they who are followers of Jesus, reflect the more glorious light of the Sun of righteousness. They should take advantage of every suitable opportunity for letting their light "shine before men," that their good works may be seen, and thus their Heavenly Father may be glorified. (St. Matt. v. 16).

"*To give light, and save life,*" is the appropriate inscription on the walls of the famous Eddystone Lighthouse.

What better motto could a Christian have?

A stranger once visiting the lighthouse at Calais, said, to the keeper, "What if one of your lights should go out at night?"

"Never! Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Sir, yonder are ships sailing to all parts of the world. If to-night one of my burners were out, in six months I should hear from America or India, saying that on such a night this lighthouse had failed to give the needful warning, and that some unfortunate vessel had been wrecked. Ah, sir! I feel sometimes, when I look upon my lights, as if the eyes of the whole world were fixed upon me. Go out? Burn dim? Never! Impossible!"

It is no vain figure of speech which describes Christians as spiritual lighthouses with the eyes of thousands gazing intently on them. How full, clear, and uniform the light of their example should be! Whenever they leave their lamps untrimmed, some poor, bewildered soul, struggling amidst the waves of temptation, for lack of the light which those Christians should impart, may be dashed upon the terrible rocks of destruction; and then, woe, not only to him who has thus been swept, unprepared, into eternity, but woe also to the unfaithful servants of God, who must account to Him for such inexcusable neglect.

The warnings of the Epiphany are loud and imperative. God grant that none of us may remain unmindful of them!

"How blessed are our eyes
That see this heavenly light!
Prophets and kings desired it long,
But died without the sight.

"The Lord makes bare His arm
Through all the earth abroad:
Let every nation now behold
Their Saviour and their God."

SERMOM XI.

THE CHILD JESUS GOING UP TO THE FEAST.

(First Sunday after Epiphany.)

“When He was twelve years old, His parents went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast.”—ST. LUKE ii. 42.

THE Gospel for this day carries all Christians back, in imagination, well-nigh nineteen hundred years, to the little peaceful village of Nazareth. We seem to see it, nestled in the bosom of a beautiful valley, sheltered with surrounding hills, and filled with corn-fields, gardens, and vineyards. The high elevation behind the village commands an extensive view; on the north, the snowy top of Hermon lifting itself high towards heaven; while, to the east, the waters of Lake Tiberias sparkle in the sunlight. Not far off is the mountain where the Saviour delivered the “Sermon on the Mount.” Here, in this sequestered village, He passed His boyhood, wandering in its mountain solitudes, and gratifying that love of nature which characterized His teachings.

Early on an April morning, when Jesus was twelve years old, He set off from Nazareth with Joseph and Mary and a goodly company of their friends and neighbors, to go to Jerusalem to keep the great Feast of the Passover.

The circuitous way which they travelled in order to avoid meeting with the unfriendly Samaritans, was a

distance of about seventy miles. The men went on foot, while mules and camels carried the women and children; the caravan cheering the weary hours by chanting familiar Psalms. It requires little imagination to portray the joy which lighted up all faces as they sang, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord! Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" (Ps. cxxii. 1-5.)

A new world opened to the wondering eyes of the Holy Child when they entered the city and His feet trod, for the first time, the courts of His Father's house.

The Passover was celebrated on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, but the holy family tarried in Jerusalem all the days of the feast of unleavened bread: eight days in all.

While there was no obligation to stay so long, provided that they carried out the requirements of the law at home, yet the happiness of uniting in the services of the temple was too great to allow them to hasten their return to Nazareth.

Every inn and private house in Jerusalem would be full to overflowing, and many pilgrims from the country would be obliged to lodge in tents, outside the walls. This, very likely, was the case with Joseph and Mary and the Holy Child.

With what interest must Jesus have watched the slaughter of the innocent lamb whose carcass was to be used in the paschal feast! We may wonder whether, at His tender age, the Holy Spirit enabled Him to discover the connection between these sacred symbolic rites and His own death in after years, as the true Paschal Lamb, whose blood was to be shed for the world's redemption;

but it is useless to indulge in speculations such as these. We shall be treading on safer ground, and be consulting our own profit more, by confining ourselves to what is written in God's word.

Joseph and Mary had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, and one may naturally ask whether the Holy Child Jesus, at the early age of twelve years, was a partaker with them.

It is clear from the facts with which St. Luke has furnished us that "the *custom* of the feast" which he speaks of, has no reference to Joseph and Mary, except so far as the usages of their religion laid down the duty which they owed to their Son, viz., their duty to bring Him to the Feast of the Passover now that he had reached the proper age.

There can be no possible mistake in this, because we read at the opening of the narrative that their own custom was to go up to the holy city "*every year*" to keep the great feast; and this they did in obedience to the law (Deut. xvi. 16). Accordingly, the year that the Holy Child Jesus attained the legal age of twelve years they went to Jerusalem, not from "the *custom*," so far as the feast affected them personally, but from obedience to the positive requirements of the Mosaic law.

"The *custom* of the feast," therefore, does not relate to Joseph and Mary's personal observance of the Passover, but to our Blessed Lord Himself. He *had* something to do with it, and He as well as Joseph and Mary was to partake of the feast, and thus, by His own act, commemorate the event in Jewish history which the Paschal Supper was designed to commemorate.

The bearing of all this is very plain. In His being

brought to the Temple in His infancy and presented to the Lord, and in His public profession of religion at the age of twelve, our Saviour was just as much a pattern to be followed by all Christians, as when He prayed, and fasted, or discharged any other holy duties, during the period of His life upon earth. The example of His childhood is equally binding upon us as that of His maturer years.

"When He was twelve years old, His parents went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast."

This simple record was made for the instruction and guidance of Christian parents. How beautiful, at such an age, to be found not only as a worshipper in the courts of the Lord, but as a partaker also, with father and mother, and kindred, and friends, in the ordinances of God's appointment.

From the earliest times, the Church, like a tender mother, has encouraged children to come to confirmation and the communion. She has always taught that the careful mention of the Saviour's age when He bore His part in the celebration of the Passover was not without design.

To "remember our Creator in the days of our youth," and to do this in a definite and satisfactory mode, is the only sure way of being safe and happy.

We are taught, accordingly, not only to "remember" God in our morning and evening prayers at home, and by worshipping Him in His holy temple, but most of all at our confirmation, and when we receive the Lord's Supper.

Archbishop Whately, whom nobody will suspect of putting too much dependence on sacramental grace, con-

sidered the communion so important for the young that he made it a rule of his diocese that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in each parish church immediately after confirmation, and that all, no matter how young, who had received the apostolic blessing in that holy rite, should partake of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is high time that churchmen should rid themselves of the cant and vain superstition which their minds have contracted by intercourse with those who "teach for doctrines, the commandments of men."

There are quite too many children in all our parishes who ought, like the Holy Child Jesus, to receive, with their parents, the appointed means of grace, but who are living unmindful of their duty and their privilege.

To draw near to Jesus in this, His own "most comfortable sacrament," is not, of course, a thing to be done lightly or irreverently; but there is little danger of any of us coming in such a spirit.

Napoleon the Great, after all his career of glory had passed away as an empty vision, and he himself was a prisoner and an exile, used to say that there had been no moment of his eventful life when his soul had been so stirred within him, as when he drew near the altar to receive the sacrament in the little village church where his early days were passed.

To cherish such reverential feelings is well; but to regard the Lord's Supper as a frightful thing, as so many half-taught people do, is simply wrong.

In the gospels, the holy communion is represented as eating and drinking with our dear Lord and Saviour.

Time was when we hung in such helpless dependence on our mother's breast, that had some cruel hand plucked

us away, we should assuredly have perished. Ever since our early infancy, our growth and strength, nay, our very *life*, have been preserved by a regular and abundant supply of convenient food. If, for any cause, this food has not been furnished, our bodily powers decreased, and the mainspring of thought became well-nigh paralyzed.

In the same way that health and vigor of body are affected by our food, so, also with the soul.

No one need expect to grow better, and overcome evil passions, and tread down Satan under foot, while he is leaving untouched that precious means of increasing in spiritual strength, which is provided for him in the Holy Supper of the Lord.

Let no child of God be shamed out of a performance of duty, lest a censorious, captious cynic might ask, "What are these people communing for? They are no better than I am!"

You need not envy such a scoffer his secret thoughts. It is his own disturbed and unhappy spirit which prompts him thus to speak. He really envies you for being brave enough to do your duty.

Our dear Lord, when as a child of twelve years He obeyed the Church rules, and kept the Passover, did not do it because He needed the strength or the wholesome restraint which holy ordinances are calculated to afford; but as an example to us. He is never so well pleased as when we offer the freshness of our youth to Him.

Dr. Arnold, while head master of Rugby School, often had the satisfaction of administering the Lord's Supper to a hundred boys at once, in the chapel of that model institution; boys, who, under less judicious management, would have been growing up pagans in a Christian land.

"I am glad to see so many of you at the Sacrament," he said, "because I believe that you are come there in earnest. My pleasure arises from this, not that I believe those who come are actually better in their general conduct than many of those who do not come, but because it gives them a chance of becoming so. The communion is like a medicine for the soul; and if we see people willing to take their medicine, we are pleased, not because there is any merit in their taking it, but because we think that, whereas, without it, they could not have recovered, now, at least, it is possible that they may.

I have led you back to Nazareth to-day, that we might go up with the Holy Child Jesus to Jerusalem, and observe Him partaking with Joseph and Mary, of the sacred feast. This pleasant picture has been preserved through all these ages for our learning. It will be sad, indeed, if we are no better for looking on it.

SERMON XII.

THE ENVY OF JOSEPH'S BRETHREN.

(Second Sunday after Epiphany.)

“When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him.”—GENESIS xxxvii. 4.

THERE is a beauty and pathos in the story of Joseph, which invest it with a peculiar charm. Indeed, if we consider the marvellous changes of fortune, the deliverance from the pit and the prison, and the sudden elevation to princely power, it may be safely said that there is nothing in the highly-seasoned tales of romance so passing strange.

About seventeen hundred years before our Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, the patriarch Jacob pitched his tent in the vale of Hebron, a part of Canaan afterwards assigned to the tribe of Judah.

Joseph first appears upon the scene in his seventeenth year. He was the son of Rachel, Jacob's well-beloved wife, then resting in her grave, near Bethlehem.

A rude cupola, called “Rachel's tomb,” attracts the reverence of passing travellers even in our own day.

Upon this lad (beautiful in person, and possessed of superior mental gifts, as Josephus tells us) the old father's affections were centred, and he doted on him, and, perchance, indulged him much. Still, the fond parent, although a man of wealth, had the good sense to train

him up to industry; for at the very time when the future viceroy of Egypt is first introduced to us, we find him tending his father's sheep. The wealthy Bedouin chief whose flocks and herds feed on the sides of Lebanon to-day, lives in the same pastoral simplicity which belonged to the age of the patriarchs.

In one respect, Jacob was seriously at fault. He allowed Joseph to be thrown too much with his elder brothers, who, instead of being wholesome examples, were licentious and depraved. The pure-minded boy was filled with horror at what he saw and heard, and on one occasion he felt obliged to report their evil-doings to their father. His elder brothers had wasted no affection on him before, and this disclosure of their wickedness was not calculated to increase it.

Moreover, the doting old father had made matters worse by bestowing upon Joseph "a coat of many colors;" a special token of his blind partiality. Although it may give a severe shock to the impressions of our childhood to have the vivid picture removed from the mind's eye of a fair lad of seventeen, strutting about as a peacock, in a garment gay with blended hues, it is best to see things as they really are. The Hebrew words, translated "a coat of many colors," mean literally, "a tunic reaching to the extremities," and describe a garment worn in Eastern lands, of white linen extending to the wrists and ankles, and embroidered with gay colors about the sleeves and skirt. Such a robe was only used by the wealthy, or by those occupying high official positions.

As mean-spirited as Joseph's older brothers were, they would hardly have been willing to murder him merely

because his father gave him a coat variegated like a patch-work bed-quilt; but when Jacob bestowed on him a garment which signified that his favorite son was to rise above the lot of humble toil in which their lives were spent, the secret of their deadly hate is revealed.

In those patriarchal times the mere whim of a father could make any one of his sons, even the youngest, the heir of his possessions; and no doubt Judah, and Reuben, and Levi, remembered that their own father, and grandfather, although younger sons, had both been enriched in this way.

We are not surprised, therefore, that when the petted Joseph had not only provoked them by reporting their evil practices to their father, but had appeared in a long robe which implied that he was to be exalted to a more honorable position than that which they themselves occupied—we are not surprised, I say, that their anger should have prompted them to desperate deeds of revenge.

No more appropriate application of this part of the history could be desired than the account given of the mother of John Wesley in the training of her children. Her rule was that of thorough impartiality. "There was no pet lamb in her flock; no Joseph among her children to be decked out in a coat of many colors, to the envy of his less-loved brethren. All her children stood before her on a common level, with equal claims, and all were treated in the same way" (Kirk).

How much heart-burning and hatred might be escaped, if all parents acted on the same wise plan!

The unpleasant state of affairs in Jacob's large household was made still worse by Joseph's dreams.

In those early days this was one of the modes by

which God made known His purposes to men. The Jewish rabbis mention two kinds of dreams—true dreams and prophetic dreams. Joseph's dreams were considered as belonging to the first of these, and, while not strictly prophetic, like the visions of Isaiah, they impressed his mind with the conviction that he should rise to future greatness.

Had he not been a very simple-minded lad, he would have kept his dreams to himself; but he not only related them to his father, but to his jealous brothers. They nursed their bitter hatred, and bided their time for punishing the unsuspecting object of it.

Joseph's brethren had been absent for some days, feeding their father's flocks in Shechem (a fertile region north of Hebron), when Jacob, becoming anxious to learn of their welfare, sent his favorite son to see them, and to carry his blessing. The old man must have observed the alienation which had been produced by his undisguised partiality, and he probably hoped that the arrival of Joseph on so gracious an errand would soften them. He could not have appreciated the stubborn trait in poor human nature, that "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Prov. xviii. 19).

What a painful evidence of our corruption, when the natural love implanted in us should degenerate into Satanic hatred!

On reaching Shechem Joseph learned that his brethren, who knew the best regions for pasturage, had gone to Dothan, which was near the great road leading down to Egypt, and he followed them there.

As they beheld the unsuspecting youth in the distance, they allowed their feelings of envy and hatred to

gain the mastery over them, and began to conspire against his life. "Behold, this dreamer cometh," they said one to another, in a tone of scorn and derision. "Let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (Gen. xxxvii. 19, 20).

The indignant brothers would scatter those ambitious dreams into thin air; but their plans for getting rid of them were to be all in vain. God had His own high purposes to be accomplished by their fulfilment. You all remember the sequel. "Instead of simply succeeding to his father's inheritance, and ruling his eleven brethren, Joseph stood next to Pharaoh, and governed busy, populous Egypt. His father and brothers did make obeisance unto him. Nay, the very sun and moon, which govern the tides and rains, and mete out years of famine and years of plenty, even these served him and helped him to the throne" (Cox's "Expositor's Note Book").

While the rest of the brothers agreed to the murderous proposal, Reuben, the eldest, was not wholly lost to the ordinary feelings of humanity, and promptly interfered to rescue Joseph from a cruel death. "Shed no blood," he said, "but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness" (22d verse); intending afterwards to restore him to his father.

The portraiture which we have of Reuben gives us a favorable impression concerning him. His unaffected anguish when he came back to the pit and found that Joseph had been spirited away; his vivid remembrance of the painful scene long years afterwards (xlii. 22); his offer to take the sole responsibility for the safety of

Benjamin (xlii. 37),—all testify to a warm and generous nature.

Meanwhile Joseph drew near, when he was instantly seized, stripped of the coat which had been the occasion of so much misery in the family, and cast into a pit. We are sure that he earnestly remonstrated with his cruel brothers, and appealed pathetically to their compassion; for years after, when they were grouped together, panic-stricken, under the roof of the Egyptian viceroy, they exclaimed, in sorrow and remorse, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear" (xlii. 21).

The providence of God now interfered for Joseph's deliverance. A company of Ishmaelites from Gilead (a fertile region east of the Jordan, famous for its spices and balsams), passed along on their way to Egypt; and Judah proposed that, instead of killing their helpless brother, they should sell him as a slave to these strangers. The hard-hearted men who could sit down quietly "to eat bread" after having cast Joseph into the pit, were quite capable of making the frightful picture complete, by yielding to the suggestions of greed, and disposing of their own flesh and blood in the way which would bring them most profit.

As the Ishmaelites could readily dispose of the likely lad in Egypt, they quickly paid the twenty pieces of silver (about fifteen dollars of our money) demanded for him, and went their way.

This brutal bargain was struck while Reuben was out of sight and hearing, and thus his generous purpose of restoring Joseph to his father was defeated. When told

of what had been done, he condemned the unnatural sin of which his brothers had been guilty, and lamented the fate of the lad with sincere sorrow. By this time, however, the merchantmen were far on their way, and all attempts to overtake them would be fruitless.

With brazen effrontery Joseph's brethren now returned to their old father with the ingenious lie which they had agreed to tell, and they even added hypocrisy to cruelty, by their efforts to comfort him.

Little had the stricken patriarch expected that "the coat of many colors," defiled with blood, would so soon be the only token left of the son whom he loved so well.

Besides the lessons which have already been suggested to us by this part of Joseph's history, it will be well for us to keep in memory the particular sin which led his brothers to the commission of so great a crime. The evil principle by which they were actuated was a very common one,—*envy*. It is an ill-natured vice, made up of meanness and malice. Envy always implies inferiority in him who harbors the foul fiend in his bosom.

"If Joseph be his father's darling, he is his brethren's eye-sore. It is doubtful whether David's brothers were more glad that Goliath was slain, or angry that he was so by their brother (I Sam. xvii.). Bad natures when they cannot reach by imitation, they will by detraction" (Bishop Henshaw).

Envy does harm both to ourselves and to others. It causes one to suffer pain from the very things which ought to give him pleasure.

Envy renders us most unlike to God, and transforms into the image of the evil one. If the portraits which are painted of envy are so hideous to look upon, why is

it that so many who are influenced by it are all unconscious of it? "Hath the Scripture said in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (St. James iv. 5.)

Fortunately envy is its own punishment. We are told in Eastern story, that a Bernese potter became envious of the prosperity of a washerman. In order to ruin this hardworking neighbor, he persuaded the king to order him to wash one of his black elephants white. The washerman shrewdly answered that, by the rules of his art, he must have a vessel large enough to wash him in. The king accordingly told the potter to make him such a vessel; but when finished, it was crushed by the first step of the elephant in it. Many trials failed, and the envious potter was ruined by the very scheme which he had contrived for the injury of his enemy.

The ordinary experience of envious people is not much more satisfactory.

When Jacob, on his dying bed, spoke prophetic words concerning the fortune of his sons, his mind wandered back to the days of sorrow which this sermon has described. Looking upon the well-beloved Joseph, he said, with trembling voice, "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob" (Gen. xlix. 23, 24).

"Charity envieth not," says the apostle (I Cor. xiii. 4); but the ungodly world knows so little of true Christian love, that it abounds with envy. The Lord's Josephs need not hope to escape the green-eyed monster. Here, however, is the Christian's consolation, "His bow shall abide in strength," as Joseph's did.

SERMON XIII.

JOSEPH IN PRISON.

(Third Sunday after Epiphany.)

“He had sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold to be a bond-servant: whose feet they hurt in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul.”
PSALM cv. 17, 18.

THE Ishmaelite traders, with their camels laden with spices, balm and myrrh, the rich productions of their country, pursued their way towards Egypt by the route west of Hebron, through Gaza. Congratulating themselves on the purchase of the attractive young Hebrew at so cheap a rate, we shall leave them for a few moments while we refresh our memories on some points which have a bearing on Joseph's history.

Egypt was a great and powerful kingdom when Abram was forced to go there for food during a severe famine in the land of Canaan (Gen. xii. 10). The date of his sojourn in the country of the Pharaohs was about two thousand years B. C., and five hundred years after the flood.

It will be needless to detail the various changes which took place in the Egyptian dynasty, and it will suffice for our purpose to mention that it was during the reign of Amenemes the Third that the country was invaded by an ignoble race of men, called Shepherd Kings, who continued their rule for more than five hundred years. Apophis, one of these Shepherd Kings, was the Pharaoh

who governed Egypt when Joseph was brought there as a slave.

The Ishmaelites halted at Heliopolis, or On, at the head of the Delta, which was then the capital city; and here they easily found a purchaser for Joseph.

"We see Pharaoh surrounded by the great officers of his court, each at the head of his department, responsible, as at the present day, for the conduct of every one beneath him; the prison, the bakery, the vintage, the wise men, the stewards, the priests, the high priest. The Nile* presents itself to us for the first time under its peculiar Hebrew name. The papyrus, which then grew in its stream, is now extinct; but the green slip of land, *achu*, 'meadow,' as it is translated (Gen. xli. 2), runs along its banks now, as then. Out of its waters, swimming across its stream, came up the buffaloes, or the sacred kine, as in Pharaoh's dream, the fit emblem of the leanness or the fertility of the future years" (Dean Stanley).

On such scenes and surroundings the eyes of Joseph rested when brought to the slave-market in Heliopolis. His purchaser was Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's royal guard; and the young Israelite was employed by him in his own dwelling.

There must have been a marked contrast between the humble habitation of his father Jacob and the elegant brick abode of Potiphar, with its pleasant gardens watered by the Nile. Here Joseph won the confidence of his master, because "the Lord is with him." This was the secret of all his marvellous deliverances. "The sculptures of old Egypt depict his life; there we see the trusted ser-

* "Nile" is derived from an Egyptian word signifying "blue."

vant overlooking all, entering with minute care, as a patient scribe, every part of his master's property in its daily administration, recording the grain, the fish, the linen, the mass of precious metal, which pass through his hands. Under Joseph's administration all things prospered" (Bishop Wilberforce).

A *busy* life is, to a certain degree, a *happy* one. The young Hebrew could even forget the treachery of his brothers and his own mortifying position as a bond-servant while his mind was kept actively employed. At the same time, the integrity of his character was put to the severest trial. Removed from the watchful eye of his doting father, and surrounded by every form of temptations which can be imagined, the foundations of moral responsibility must have been firmly laid, to have remained undisturbed.

Over and above the ordinary evil influences to be dreaded in a heathen land, Potiphar's wife, true to the type of old Egyptian womanhood, first tempts Joseph to sin, and, enraged at his holy resistance to her seducing arts, appeases her vengeance by a false accusation against him.

Amidst all these dangers he preserves his purity and uprightness. How grand, like some lustrous diamond gleaming inwardly on his lonely spirit, the talisman of the one thought, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!" (Gen. xxxix. 9.)

Joseph had now been ten years in Egypt; and at the age of twenty-seven, when the prosperity of the young stranger seemed complete, the wheel of fortune suddenly shifted; and Potiphar, enraged by the story which his unprincipled wife had told, and without allowing his

faithful agent to utter a word in his own defence, cast him into prison. The angry husband would have been glad to have slain the young man, but by the laws of Egypt, not even a bond-slave could be put to death without permission of the king.

The prison in which Joseph was confined was probably adjoining Potiphar's own dwelling; and the old rabbis relate that the innocent victim was often brought out, and tortured for the amusement of the wicked woman whose malice had accomplished his ruin. Of course such language is only in accordance with the short-sighted notions of mortals. The all-seeing God still watched over His faithful servant; and, in His own good time, He will vindicate his uprightness, and exalt him with honor.

The keeper of the prison had discernment enough very soon to discover that the Hebrew youth was worthy of his confidence; and pitying his forlorn and friendless condition, he tried to alleviate his sorrow by entrusting the most responsible duties of his office to his care.

From this fact, we are sometimes disposed to forget that in spite of the favor thus shown him he was, nevertheless, a prisoner whose keen sense of the injustice which had been done him rendered even the lightest fetters as iron entering into the soul. The inspired Psalmist has disclosed to us the secret why this strange misfortune was allowed. "*The iron entered into his soul, until the time came that his cause was known; the word of the Lord tried him*" (Ps. cv. 18, 19).

Joseph's faith in the promises of God was tested by his long imprisonment. The visions of his early youth in which his future government of Egypt had been foreshadowed had seemed very strange, and yet he had re-

garded them as the voices of God. A man in whose hands such vast power was to be placed could not be properly educated under the shadow of his father's tent in Hebron. Severe trial was needed to fit him for his work. "Sold into Egypt as a slave, cast into prison through his fidelity to God, the word of the Lord most powerfully tried his soul. In the gloom of that imprisonment it was most hard to believe in God's faithfulness when his affliction had risen from his obedience, and most hard to keep the promise clearly before him, when his mighty trouble would perpetually tempt him to regard it as an idle dream" (Hull).

It happened that among the prisoners placed under Joseph's direction were the chief cup-bearer and the chief purveyor of the king. These men had in some way given offence to their royal master, and in his wrath he had cast them into the dungeon. It is worthy of notice that it was the captain of the guard who entrusted these dignified offenders to Joseph's care. We may fairly conclude from this circumstance that Potiphar had by this time become convinced of the young man's innocence; but in order to conceal the dishonor of his wife, he still kept him in prison.

These two officers of Pharaoh dreamed a curious dream on the same night; and when the under-jailor came to them in the morning, in the regular discharge of his duties, he found them depressed and downcast, dreading lest the dreams might be ominous of coming evil. Joseph's pity was aroused, and he inquired the cause of their anxiety, and listened attentively to the recital of their dreams.

Disclaiming all ability to relieve their bewilderment

and distress by any wisdom of his own, he assured them that God could make him the instrument of doing this, if it pleased Him to do so.

It is always a painful task to communicate distressing intelligence, but no alternative was left to Joseph, and while it gave him pleasure to assure the chief-butler that the interpretation of his dream disclosed the fact that he would be restored to his former office, it must have cost him a pang when he was obliged to inform the chief-baker that he should suffer an ignominious death.

Mark the ingratitude and selfishness of men. Having assured the royal cup-bearer of his speedy release, Joseph besought him that he would exert his influence to have him delivered from his cruel imprisonment, when he was allowed again to stand before the king. Although a promise to that effect was, undoubtedly, cheerfully made, it was very badly kept.

The chief-butler was taken back into the confidence of the king, and had abundant opportunities for speaking a kind word in behalf of the poor Hebrew captive; but for two long years, he gave no heed to the matter.

Before expressing your indignation against this ingrate, ask yourself, my hearer, is there no sufferer in the wide world who is even now waiting for some fair promise of yours to be fulfilled? Is there no penniless widow, no orphans defrauded of their rights, no child of affliction, treasuring up a kind word spoken by you, and hoping that ere long it may be made good?

At last, "after two full years," when hope deferred had made the heart sick, the mercy of God interposed for the deliverance of His servant. Pharaoh himself was troubled by mysterious dreams, and when the world renowned

diviners and sooth-sayers had tried in vain to interpret them, the royal cup-bearer remembered the long-neglected Joseph, who was speedily brought from prison to the palace. By the help of the divine spirit Joseph immediately discovered the meaning of the visions, and he told the king that seven years of unexampled plenty would be followed by seven years of fearful dearth. His advice being asked, how to provide against the impending calamity, Joseph recommended that a fifth part of the produce during the years of abundance should be stored up in granaries built for the purpose.

The king saw the wisdom of the measure, and insisted that Joseph should forthwith assume the important office of prime minister over the land of Egypt.

Thus, through the overruling providence of God, the Hebrew slave became next in dignity and power to the king himself. He was invested with a golden necklace, clothed in the white robe of state, and wore the royal signet ring. Joseph also rode in the showy chariot reserved for those of the highest rank, and a shout such as is yet heard in Oriental cities, cleared the way before him as he passed along the crowded streets.

His Hebrew name gave place to the lofty Egyptian title which meant either "Revealer of secrets," or "Saviour of the age." Joseph became the son-in-law of the high priest of the Sun-god, in the sacred city of On.

"Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His dwelling so high and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth! He taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire, that He may set him with the princes, even with the princes of His people" (Ps. cxiii. 5-7).

At the age of thirty, Joseph had thus become governor of all Egypt.

The most natural reflection suggested by this sudden change in his lot is this, that we can be in no condition, however deplorable and desperate, from which God can not speedily deliver us. He is never at a loss for means by which to accomplish His gracious purposes.

Moreover, we are in the surest way to happiness when we have placed ourselves, uncomplainingly, in God's hands, and are patiently awaiting His good pleasure. It was said of Joseph, in the text, that his feet were hurt in the stocks, and "*the iron entered into his soul.*"

There is comfort for every child of God in the thought that he is made strong through suffering. When the Almighty would raise up patriots and heroes for the State, and saints and martyrs for the Church, he trains them in the school of adversity, and suffers the iron to enter into their souls.

SERMON XIV.

JOSEPH THE PRIME MINISTER.

(Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.)

“The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”—ACTS vii. 9, 10.

THE alteration in Joseph's fortune was so sudden and so surprising that it must have seemed to him like a dream.

“He exchanges a captive's chain for ornaments of gold; the prison garb for courtly vesture; the narrow walls of a jail for crowded streets through which, amid acclaims that rend the skies, he is borne in a royal chariot. He was Potiphar's slave; he has become Potiphar's lord. He begged favors of a butler; the proudest princes of Egypt now live in his smiles, and tremble at his frown” (Dr. Guthrie).

Joseph was not the man to be satisfied with *playing* the prime minister; but he began, forthwith, to carry out the duties of his high office with diligence and conscientiousness. The indications were soon made apparent to every one, that his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was correct. The year in which Joseph was called to assume the management of public affairs proved to be a year of plenty, and it was followed by six years of like

abundance; and "in the seven plenteous years, the earth brought forth by handfuls" (xli. 47).

The rains in Abyssinia were abundant, and the majestic Nile rose to an unusual height. The waters, at first of a greenish tinge, by reason of the quantity of decayed vegetable matter, became, in a few days, of a red color, from the mud held in solution; thus spreading over the face of the country a rich deposit, which was the secret of the remarkable harvests of Egypt.

Thus, in a country which has very little rain, a gracious providence has provided for the necessities of the case; and it is easy to understand why Homer sang the praises of the Nile, and why the grateful Egyptians worshipped it as a god.

The very superabundance of the crops during the seven years of plenty might have led the people to be wasteful and improvident; but the forethought of Joseph made provision for the season of dearth. He "went throughout all the land of Egypt" (xli. 46) gathering up the surplus stores of grain, and placing it in large buildings, divided into vaults, with arched roofs, which were erected for the purpose.

Improvvidence is a common weakness. People are too much disposed to enjoy the good of the present and to leave the future to take care of itself. It is always much easier to *get* than to *keep*.

If men were only improvident about "the meat which perisheth" (St. John vi. 27), the case would not be so deplorable; but when we see them unmindful of "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," it is high time that they should be reminded of their folly.

By the judicious directions of Joseph, each city of

Egypt was provided with its own storehouse; and thus, when the years of famine came, the means of relief were close at hand.

The spiritual privileges which God bestows upon us, can never be safely neglected nor undervalued. Christian people who are now enjoying these to the full, may yet experience the terrible lack of the Bread of Life, foretold by the prophet: "*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord*" (Amos viii. 11).

Take from the soul of man its heavenly nourishment, which is to be found alone in a Saviour appropriated and made its own by faith, and it is left a prey to the gnawing of eternal want.

O, let the starving prodigal come back to the forgiving Father's house, where is bread enough and to spare!

The great valley of the Nile presented a busy scene during those seven years of abundance when the active viceroy was making such ample provision of the days of dearth. When the failure of the first year's flood brought distinctly before the minds of the people the great calamity that awaited them, their respect and reverence for the man whom God had entrusted with His own secrets must have been immeasurably increased. Even the stubborn unbelievers, who had laughed at the prediction of famine so long as the years of plenty continued to return, would now change their tune.

On the eighth year the Nile failed to rise to the usual level, and when harvest-time came there was little grain to be reaped. The consequences were soon felt: "There was no bread in all the land" (xlvii. 13). The careless

people had neglected to provide for the future. Children cried for bread, while wretched fathers and mothers looked at their perishing offspring, and then at one another in silent despair. At last, rousing themselves to action, they hastened to the royal palace and cried aloud to the king.

He who governs the people must protect them, and provide for their urgent needs. Pharaoh referred them to Joseph. The prime minister at once threw open the granaries, and sold unto the people. The money thus obtained was placed in the royal treasury; and while the lives of the subjects were saved, the interests of the monarchy were promoted.

As the weary years of famine passed slowly by, money failed, and the Egyptians had recourse to barter, in order to ward off starvation. Their cattle, their lands, and, at last, the people themselves became the property of the king. When things reached this point Joseph generously proposed that a fifth part of the produce only, should be given as a recognition of the rights of the crown. This policy was both wise and just. The people had received timely warning of the years of famine, and they had ample means for providing against it, had they chosen to do so. The government had, therefore, an undoubted claim on its subjects for having taken precautions which they had so foolishly neglected. In any case, it may have been expedient to make a new allotment of land, and to reduce an unequal system of taxation to a simple claim to a fifth part of the harvest.

The terrible famine, the effects of which had thus impoverished the Egyptians, had also been felt by surrounding countries. Syria, Arabia, and Palestine were common sufferers with the subjects of Pharaoh. Dependent alike

for rain on the vapors which rise from the Mediterranean, they all shared in the blighting effects of the drought. The tidings that there was corn in Egypt spread rapidly from land to land, and multitudes of people flocked thither to buy food.

The Egyptians were, at this time, at peace with the neighboring nations, and the royal viceroy cheerfully sold to all who came.

Among the crowds who arrive at Heliopolis, the great market for traders from the East, we recognize Joseph's brothers, Reuben, Levi, Simeon, and the rest—all older, and more careworn than when he saw them last. They were introduced into the presence of the viceroy, as all buyers, both natives and foreigners, were referred at once to him. The change produced in a youth of seventeen by the addition of so many years, his new name, his regal attire, his lofty station, his language and bearing, had so effectually disguised Joseph that his brothers, all unconsciously, fulfilled his dream to the very letter, and humbly bowed down before him.

He, on the contrary, recognized them, and resolved to take advantage of this opportunity to discover their real feelings towards their aged father and Benjamin.

The whole tenor of his behavior towards them shows conclusively that he was actuated by no sentiments of revenge. However freely Joseph might have forgiven them for their heartless cruelty towards himself, he wished to find out whether they were better men than they once were, before he ran the risk of bringing a band of desperadoes to stir up strife in Egypt. With this purpose in view, he at first accused them of being spies, who, under a false pretence of buying food, had come to dis-

cover the most defenceless parts of the kingdom, and thus to be prepared to lead an invading army to the attack. Joseph's brothers understood his meaning, and promptly repelled the charge. When he repeated it again, in order to draw out fuller information, they answered, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not" (xlii. 10-13). Thus his purpose was accomplished; and having learned that Benjamin was alive, his heart yearned to see him. He, therefore, abruptly broke off his conversation with them, and demanded that one of them should go and bring the younger brother down to Egypt.

This was an unreasonable proposition; but on their refusal to comply, they were imprisoned for three days; thus affording them ample opportunity to reflect on their wickedness towards their brother. In the midst of their apprehension that they should all be condemned as spies, they were again brought before Joseph, who proposed a plan by which they could prove their innocence; a plan which he introduced with the remarkable declaration, as coming from the lips of one whom they believed to be an Egyptian: "*I fear God.*"

This confession gave instant relief to their troubled minds, and they gladly agreed to the condition required.

Joseph, accordingly, took Simeon and "bound him before them," as a pledge of their return with their younger brother. Then it was that conscience vindicated its supremacy, and they gave utterance to the bitter self-reproach, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother!" (Genesis xlii. 21.)

Conscience said to the affrighted Hebrews, "You can

not look for mercy, for you showed none!" We only knew the fact before, but now we hear of the entreaties which poor Joseph made when they cast him into the pit. His tears, his bitter cry, "O Judah, O Reuben!" waxed fainter and fainter, till it died on the ear, and they coolly sat down to eat and drink.

Alas! have none of us ever enjoyed ourselves with creature comforts, when the cry of distress has been heard? At this very moment, while we are feasting on spiritual privileges, what multitudes, whose hunger for the Bread of Life we might find means to satisfy, appeal to us in vain.

The Christian world may, however, congratulate itself that in our day there is one text which is seldom preached on: "*The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*"

John Bunyan tells us that "Master Prejudice fell down and broke his leg;" and he gravely adds, "I would that he had broke his neck too."

I hope we are all prepared to endorse this sentiment with a devout *Amen*.

While Joseph's brothers conversed together in their native tongue they little suspected that the royal viceroy understood them. He was, however, greatly moved, and retired awhile to weep. Although thus deeply touched by the evidence which they gave of their penitence, this was not the time to make himself known; and he carried out the plan which he had proposed of keeping one of them as a hostage. Simeon, whose cruel disposition had shown itself on more than one occasion, was chosen for this purpose.

With sacks well filled with corn, Joseph's brethren return to Canaan; but only to bring fresh sorrow on their

old father by the announcement that Simeon had been left in Egypt. Having related the particulars of their journey, the brothers began to unlade their beasts and to deposit the corn in the storehouses, when their anxieties were renewed by discovering that each man's bundle of money remained in his sack.

Joseph was prompted to this arrangement by his apprehension that the long-continued season of dearth might have reduced his aged father to want, and to encourage his brethren by so generous an act not to be afraid to venture again into his presence. The whole affair, however, seemed to them to be involved in mystery, and to betoken no good. We are, therefore, not surprised when the heart-broken Jacob reproached them with having bereaved him of his children, and hastily declared, "All these things are against me!" (verse 36.)

The same lack of confidence in God is often seen in Christians when laboring under great weakness of body, and when the distracted mind fails to discharge its functions properly.

As Jacob found himself mistaken, and the departure of Benjamin was only to furnish fresh tokens of Joseph's love, so will every devout believer discover, at the last, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." The end will not only *crown* all, but *explain* all, and call forth not merely expressions of satisfaction, but of gratitude and praise.

"Hear, O Thou Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep; show Thyself also, Thou that sittest between the Cherubim" (Ps. lxxx. 1).

"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock," exclaimed Savonarola in the midst of his trials, "art considered by

the unbelieving to have no thought for our affairs; therefore stretch forth Thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut."

As God led Joseph like a sheep in his innocence, his purity, his meekness, and his patience, from prison to a throne, so will He lead all pure and patient souls by the same path to His own fold, and to the green pastures of Heavenly blessedness.

SERMON XV.

JOSEPH RECONCILED TO HIS BRETHREN.

(Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.)

“I am Joseph your brother.”—GENESIS xlv., part of 4th verse.

ARABIAN historians describe famines which prevailed in Eastern lands, even during the Christian era, equal in all respects to that from which Joseph was made the instrument for delivering Egypt. “Large numbers emigrated,” is the report of one of these. “The poor ate carrion, corpses, and dogs. They went further, devouring even little children. The eating of human flesh became so common as to excite no surprise. The people spoke and heard of it as of an indifferent thing. As for the number of the poor who perished from hunger and exhaustion, God alone knows what it was. A traveller often passed through a large village without seeing a single living inhabitant. The road between Egypt and Assyria was like a vast field sown with human bodies.”

We are not surprised to learn that the supply of corn which the sons of Jacob had carried home to their starving households was soon exhausted. As at least sixty or seventy persons had to be fed, only a few weeks passed before their necessities became as pressing as ever. It is true, fruit was to be found in the land of Canaan (Gen. xliii. 11), but this was no substitute for bread. Starvation

was once more staring them in the face when Jacob said, "Go again, buy us a little food." The claims of nature must prevail even over his love for Benjamin; and Judah having pledged his own life for the safety of his younger brother, the aged father reluctantly agreed that his youngest son should go.

Here it will be proper to remind you of the importance of dwelling upon the smallest hints which the sacred narrative affords. "The simple account of Jacob's reluctance to part with Benjamin, would lead us to suppose that it was expressed and overcome in a short time, and with no great effort. Yet we incidentally hear from Judah that this family struggle (for such it seems to have been) had occupied as much time as would have sufficed for a journey to Egypt and back"* (Gen. xliii. 10).

With double money in their hands, with a present for the governor of Egypt, and with the heart, yea, the very life of the aged patriarch, in their keeping, the brothers set out on a second pilgrimage to buy food.

On reaching Egypt they were brought into Joseph's presence, and perceiving at a glance that Benjamin was with them, he turned to the ruler of his house and said, "Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon."

Although the steward of the viceroy must have been perplexed by this unusual order, he prepared to carry it into effect; while Joseph's brothers were filled with alarm, supposing that they were about to be called to account for the money which they had found in their sacks' mouth. Standing at the door of the house, as if afraid to enter,

* Blunt's Undesigned Coincidences.

they gave the steward a detailed account of the whole affair. He seems to have been a kind and friendly man, and from his being able to converse with them in their own tongue, it seems not unlikely that he was a Canaanite who had been taken captive during some of the Egyptian wars.

The steward endeavored to quiet their anxiety, saying, in a gracious tone, "Peace be to you, fear not; your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money."

It would appear from this that Joseph had conversed with the steward concerning the God whom he served, and who had brought him to such great honor, and that the servant had been impressed by the master's words.

Having thus re-assured the anxious strangers, the steward now "brought Simeon out to them," greatly to their gratification and delight. The whole company were then received into Joseph's house, and furnished with water for the ablutions common in Eastern lands. They had been given to understand that they were to dine with the viceroy that day, and they took advantage of this interval to arrange the present which they had brought for him from Canaan.

At last Joseph came, and after the customary salutations he inquired, with a mixture of anxiety and hope, after the welfare of their father. When his loving eye rested upon Benjamin, he said, "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake unto me?" and then, addressing the lad himself, he added, "God be gracious unto thee, my son."

Here, his self-control gave way, and he hastened from the presence of his brethren that he might pour out his

soul in secret. Having washed his face, that the evidences of his emotion might not be discovered, he returned to the company, and gave orders to the steward that the dinner should be served.

Three tables were spread: one for Joseph, as the governor of the country, another for his invited guests, and a third for the Egyptians of his household, whose religious scruples did not allow them to eat with other nations.

To the amazement of Joseph's brethren, they were arranged at the table in due order of seniority, as though they had been at their father's board. The provisions for the entertainment were varied and abundant, the viceroy sending from his own table, on which the dishes were first placed, messes to all his brethren. As a special mark of honor, the portion set apart for Benjamin "was five times as much as any of theirs."

Probably one object which Joseph had in view, in this strange procedure was to discover whether his elder brothers were still possessed by the hateful spirit of envy, which had so nearly cost him his life. Fortunately, they stood the test, and the feast was one of gladness and rejoicing. "It is not difficult to conjecture on what subjects they would converse. Without betraying himself, Joseph would no doubt inquire more minutely of their country and their home, of their father and of their families, and would receive information which, to him, would be most cheering. Perhaps of that company none would be happier than Joseph himself, and if his plans succeeded, and his brethren should prove themselves worthy of his confidence, he would ere long lay aside his disguise, and make himself known to them as their brother" (Thornley Smith).

Loaded with kindness and provided with a supply of food for their families, Joseph's brethren set out on their journey back to Canaan with light hearts.

A fresh and most painful surprise now awaited them. In order to place the kindly feelings of the elder brothers towards Benjamin beyond all doubt, Joseph had directed his steward to secrete the large goblet which he himself had just used at the banquet, in the mouth of Benjamin's sack; thus arranging a plan for the arrest of the company, and affording an excuse for their more careful examination.

Although this cup is described as a "divining cup," it must not be supposed that Joseph had adopted this custom of the Egyptians. He merely wished to deceive his brethren for a time, and he might as well affect divination by his cup, as he affected to believe that they had stolen it.

Joseph's brethren had got some distance beyond the city of Heliopolis, and had probably reached their first halting-place for refreshment, when the steward of the viceroy's house appeared with a number of attendants, and arrested them on the charge of having carried off the royal cup. With astonishment and terror, they denied the accusation in all the confidence of innocence. Search was made for the stolen cup; ten of the company were acquitted with honor, and they were beginning to exult, when, to their utter dismay, the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Overwhelmed with shame and alarm, they were again brought into Joseph's presence. To deny the offence would be folly, and to account for it was impossible.

The effect of the painful and searching examination

was to convince Joseph that his brothers were better men than they once were, and he longed to put an end to their suspense. The touching words of Judah penetrated his soul, but, even then, he restrained his emotions still further, until his Egyptian attendants had been dismissed. He would not put his brethren to an open shame before these strangers, for the horrible cruelty with which they had once treated him. Their consternation was no doubt greatly increased when the Egyptians were told to depart; and the eleven brethren stood petrified with terror.

At first the emotions of the viceroy were too big for utterance; but he wept so loud, that even the Egyptians who, at his bidding, had withdrawn to an adjoining apartment heard. Then, gaining something of composure, he said in words almost inarticulate through tears, "I am Joseph!"

The brothers thunderstruck, and stung with remorse, could make no reply, and the viceroy added: "Doth my father yet live?"

Still they answered nothing. The lofty ruler of Egypt might have reproached them for their treacherous cruelty, but he studied only how he might remove their embarrassment and dread. "Come near to me, I pray you," he said in gentlest words; "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life." In listening to these words, we know not which to admire most; the magnanimity of Joseph, in not only pardoning, but even making excuses for his cruel brothers; or for his sublime devotion to God, which enabled him to discover

in each event of life, whether prosperous or adverse, the ordering of His gracious providence. It was God who had brought him into Egypt, and made him, the poor bond-slave, a father unto Pharaoh; and, not only so, but had enabled him to become the preserver of his own race. Joseph must have often heard of the gracious promises which had been made to Abraham, and Isaac, and he now saw clearly that his being sent into Egypt had formed one part of the plan by which these promises were to be fulfilled.

In order to this, however, it was necessary that Jacob and his family should be removed to Egypt, and nourished there during the continuance of the famine. Joseph's brethren were so completely astounded by all that they saw and heard, that their apprehensions began to return, when he continued, "Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

The tender feelings of his loving heart again struggled for relief, and Joseph fell on the neck of Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Nor did he manifest his affection for Benjamin only, for "he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them." All apprehension and reserve was over now, and his brethren talked with him.

Here I pause in the narrative, to remind you of One, of whom Joseph was the type, Jesus, the Divine Mediator, who now distributes the Bread of Life to the starving millions, even to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Joseph was carried down into Egypt, even as Jesus was, in His earliest days, as prophecy had foretold, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" (Hosea xi. 1).

The stranger and the Gentile have come for spiritual sustenance to Christ, while His own kinsmen according to the flesh, the children of Israel, for the most part, remain unmindful of His royal dignity and power; but the day is at hand when they will recognize in Jesus the long looked-for Messiah, and will return unto Him, that they may have life. As He whom Joseph foreshadowed, was betrayed and crucified, so let us remember, that we, also, "are guilty concerning our brother," and that our sins helped to nail Him to the cross.

In the very midst of His agonies, He prayed for His murderers; and He is ready to say to us, if we come to Him for the Bread, "I am Joseph your Brother; be not grieved nor angry with yourselves; for God did send me before you to preserve life!"

SERMON XVI.

THE WAGONS WHICH JOSEPH SENT.

(Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.)

“Now thou art commanded, this do ye: take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.”—GENESIS xlv. 19.

THE report that Joseph's brethren had come, soon reached Pharaoh's ears, and this amiable monarch strove to repay the benefits which the viceroy had brought upon Egypt, by heaping favors upon his kindred. He not only proposed that Jacob and his family should remove to the land of Goshen, the most desirable part of his dominions, but wagons were provided for the purpose. Preparations for the departure of Joseph's brethren were, accordingly, speedily made, and they set out for Canaan.

Meanwhile, the aged patriarch had been impatiently awaiting their return, and many times a day would his wistful eyes be fixed upon the road by which Benjamin was expected back. At length a company was seen in the distance; but what could it all mean? Instead of eleven weary men driving their beasts before them laden with corn, Jacob beholds an imposing retinue, the wagons of Pharaoh. The heart which has so long been crushed by affliction, interprets every appearance against itself.

The most that the old man had hoped for, had been

that he should see Benjamin come back in safety; but when this wish was not only gratified, but his sons announce with breathless impatience, that Joseph was yet alive, and had become a mighty prince in Egypt, the news was too good to be believed. He had been ready enough to credit every evil report which had been brought to him, but he was slow to receive the tidings of good.

It was only the actual sight of "the wagons which Joseph had sent" to carry him to his new home, which convinced him of the truth of what was told him.

Wagons, it is thought, were then unknown in Palestine; and it is probable that these were drawn by oxen, and covered to protect the travellers from the sun.

Jacob almost forgets the infirmities of age, and exclaims with rapture, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

The flocks and herds were collected, the tents struck, and the emigrants began their journey from Hebron. Moving on to Beersheba, a distance of twenty-five miles, where Abraham had planted a grove, and digged a well, the whole company halted, and before quitting their own country joined in a solemn religious service.

The sacrifice was graciously accepted by the Most High, and Jacob was cheered in his night visions, by the assurance that God would go down with him into Egypt, and that when the purposes of His overruling providence were accomplished his posterity should be brought back to the land of their fathers.

On approaching the borders of Egypt, Judah was sent forward in advance, to announce to Joseph the speedy coming of Jacob.

How often has the land of Egypt sheltered and nour-

ished God's chosen ones! Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Moses, and, even our Blessed Lord Himself, found protection and rest in Egypt.

Joseph lost no time in going to welcome his father, falling on his neck, and weeping for joy. The silence was broken by Jacob, only half conscious of what he said, who exclaimed, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive!"

Would that all children in these latter days might learn a lesson from Jacob's noble son. They never show more honor to their Heavenly Father than when they pay due respect to their earthly parents. A disobedient son or daughter can not be a good Christian.

A beautiful trait of Sir Thomas More's character was his dutiful attention to his aged father, Sir John More, who, when nearly ninety, still sat in the Court of King's Bench. Every day during "term-time," before Sir Thomas, then Lord Chancellor, took his own high place, he first went and kneeled at his old father's feet, and asked for his blessing.

The prominent position which Joseph occupied in Egypt ensured his father and brethren a friendly reception; and the fertile district of Goshen, the best pasture land of Egypt, was assigned by the munificent sovereign for their use. Jacob was introduced at court, and Pharaoh received the aged patriarch with the utmost consideration and kindness. "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." This he did, not merely as an expression of politeness to a stranger, but as an act of homage towards a sovereign whose subject he was henceforward to be. "The less is blessed of the greater," and in this sense, Jacob as the servant and prophet of the Lord, was the superior of the king; and he

therefore, invoked the divine blessing upon him, and upon his people.

In order to remove all embarrassment from the venerable man, who had thus far only been familiar with rustic life and manners, Pharaoh bethought him of some point which would make the conversation less formal; and, accordingly asked Jacob his age. The patriarch answered, with the utmost simplicity, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage" (xlvi. 9).

Jacob had lived twice as long as men do in our time, and yet he describes his life as a brief pilgrimage. He spoke as he did, not because his life was shorter than that of his forefathers, but because it was so nearly ended. The language of the patriarch was that of a pilgrim. How natural the apostle's reasoning: "They who say such things declare plainly that they seek a country; that they long for a better country, even a heavenly" (Heb. xi. 14).

The conception of life as a temporary dwelling in a tent gives an inexpressible sublimity to some of the declarations of the Old Testament, and sets forth the security of the everlasting rest. "From the ends of the earth do I cry unto Thee, (from this far-off foreign land); O that I might dwell in Thy tabernacle of the eternities!" (Ps. lxi.)

In a spiritual sense, the question might be profitably put to every one: "How old art thou?" How old in grace? We have lived, really and truly, only so long as we have been trying to live to God.

Before the interview between Jacob and Pharaoh which has been just described, Joseph had presented five of his brethren to the king; probably five of the eldest, who appeared as representatives of the family. They were received with favor; and, as Joseph had anticipated, Pharaoh asked them of their occupation. All reasonable people are supposed to have some sort of occupation, and nothing could have been more natural than the question of the king. Occupation was one of the pleasures of Paradise, and no one can be happy without it.

Joseph had instructed his brethren to say that they had been traders in cattle from their youth; that the rich pastures of Goshen might be given them, and in order that they might not be brought into close contact with the Egyptians, who hated shepherds, as belonging to the lowest caste of the people. Besides this, he looked forward to the time when the posterity of Jacob would return to Canaan; and Goshen afforded the easiest point of departure, as being the part of Egypt nearest Palestine.

Joseph's brethren, accordingly, soon pitched their tents in this fair portion of the land, and accommodated themselves to their new surroundings: the whole family being abundantly provided for out of the well-filled granaries of the viceroy. Pharaoh's own cattle were pastured in the same region; and as these were greatly multiplied by the constant exchange for food, the king was glad to avail himself of the skill of Joseph's brethren as herdsmen.

At last the dreadful famine ceased, but the family of Jacob still remained in Egypt, "and had possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly" (verse 27).

The cloud, so dark and portentous, which had once hung over the head of the venerable patriarch, had burst, showering abundant blessings on him and his; and for seventeen years he dwelt in Goshen, having every reason to account his last days as his happiest and the best. When he felt that the end of life was drawing near, he sent for Joseph, that he might make known to him his wishes concerning his burial.

Although so constantly occupied with the cares of the kingdom, the viceroy lost no time in hastening to his father's bedside, taking his two sons with him, that they might have the dying prayers and blessing of their aged grandfather.

Knowing that at some future day his descendants would return to Canaan, Jacob required Joseph to take a solemn oath, that he should not be buried in Egypt, but that his bones should be laid with those of Abraham and Isaac, in the cave of Machpelah, in the land of Canaan.

Manasseh and Ephraim were both young men, and they had not been brought up like simple herdsmen, as Jacob's sons had been, but amidst the splendor of the Egyptian court. Jacob now solemnly adopts them as his own children, saying, "They are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." By this act, he transferred the double portion which, by the law of primogeniture, properly belonged to Reuben, but which he had forfeited by his evil conduct, to his well-beloved Joseph. "That Joseph should have a double portion of the inheritance, and that each of his sons should be reckoned among the tribes of Israel, was a distinguished privilege. How much better was it for them that they should obtain possessions in the land of Canaan than in the land of Egypt! Had

they retained their alliance with the house of Potiphar their names would probably have sunk into oblivion; whereas, now they are known throughout the world, and will be known to the very end of time. They and their posterity were also preserved from idolatry, and brought up to worship the Lord Jehovah" (Thornley Smith).

Having blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, and foretold that the younger brother should be greater than the elder, Jacob turned to his son Joseph, and as if the belief which he cherished of a future life had banished all apprehension, he calmly said, "Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers" (verse 21).

If Abraham saw the day of Christ afar off, and rejoiced, we can not doubt that Jacob saw it also.

Probably on the evening of the same day that this took place, finding that his moments were numbered, Jacob summoned his sons, that they might hear his prophetic words. When these were spoken, he charged *all* his sons, even as he had charged Joseph, concerning his burial in the land of Canaan" (xlix. 29); and then, like one falling into a sweet sleep, the old man passed away.

The body was embalmed, according to the custom of the Egyptians, and seventy days of mourning followed, before the long funeral train set out for Canaan. There Jacob was buried in the consecrated spot where Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, Rebecca and Leah, were sleeping in the dust. It was only a few short years since the wagons of Pharaoh had been sent to carry the patriarch into Egypt, and now, the same pomp had been employed to carry back his remains to Canaan.

Jacob had been embalmed by the physicians, but he is preserved by a more precious perfume than the spices of Egypt; for after all these ages, his memory as preserved in the Bible, sends forth an undiminished fragrance.

"Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt," was the direction given, when Jacob was brought down to the land of plenty.

The Chariot which the Bride spoke of in the Song of Solomon, was "made of the wood of Lebanon" (iii. 9). It must come from the place to which it is to carry you. "Take you wagons out of Egypt." The means of grace which are to help us forward on the way come from the blessed place to which they are to guide us. As Joseph lovingly sent all the good things of Egypt to be the sustenance of his father and his brethren on their journey, so the true Joseph provides even more graciously for us. Let us all seek to be more closely united unto Him, that when the King of Glory shall bring up His Bride from the Egypt of the world we may enter into the palace which He has prepared in His glorious city.

SERMON XVII.

JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS.

(*Septuagesima.*)

"So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."—GENESIS l. 26.

IN John Keble's beautiful lines for the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, "a parallel is drawn between human life and the aspects of the weather. The morning rainbow, glittering among the dangerous vapors of the west, predicts that the day will not unclouded pass away. The evening rainbow declares that the storms are past, and that serene weather is setting in. Such is the life of all whom God disciplines. The morning or the evening brightness is the portion of a life, the rest of which is storm. Rarely are the manful struggles of principle in the first years of life suffered to be in vain. Joseph saw the early clouds, which darkened the morning of his existence, pass away; and the rainbow of heavenly peace arched over the calmness of his later years" (F. W. Robertson).

At the time of his father's death, Joseph had reached his fifty-sixth year. Thus far the sacred historian has dwelt upon the various incidents of his romantic life with uncommon particularity. The remaining fifty-four years are crowded into the smallest possible space.

According to the promise which Joseph had made to Pharaoh, he and his brethren returned to Egypt as soon

as the funeral rites for their aged father had been attended to. It was only natural to suppose that the sight of their native land and its familiar scenes, would kindle a desire to remain there; but their families and possessions were in Goshen, and they were not yet strong enough to contend against the Canaanites, who held possession of the territory.

Not long after the return of Joseph and his brethren to Egypt, he received a message from them which must have sounded very strangely to one who had so freely and fully forgiven them. During several years past he had treated them with such uniform kindness and consideration, that it seems hard to understand how they could have failed to discover that with him "by-gones" were really "by-gones." Nevertheless, the remembrance of their unnatural cruelty towards him must have often disturbed their minds; and they had actually worked themselves up into the belief that, now that their father was dead, Joseph would be sure to call them to a strict account for their sin. In the pitiful message which they sent, they dragged in Jacob, and put words into his mouth which he probably never uttered. Indeed, he could hardly have been so ignorant of Joseph's nobleness of character as to have suspected him of such meanness and duplicity.

The brothers showed that they had not lost all their original craft, in the ingenious terms in which their message was expressed. Instead of saying, "*Our* father said thus and so," they adroitly put it, "Thy father, who loved thee, and whose loss thou dost so much deplore, he did command before he died, that we should make this appeal to thee."

This grievous apprehension of vengeance was the offspring of their own evil hearts. Little did they understand the nature of vindictive hate, when they could believe that a secret grudge kept warm for years, would be given up in response to the most cringing confession and apology.

Joseph wept when he received the message. There was a double occasion for his tears. His brother's message brought back the father's image, and opened afresh the fountain of grief. Moreover, it pained him to be suspected of disingenuousness and deceit.

Calling them into his presence, they once more unwittingly fulfilled his boyhood's dream, by falling down before him, and saying, "Behold, we are thy servants." Joseph forgot the injury, and spoke kindly to them, bidding them fear not. He showed his forgiveness by renouncing all claim to the office of avenger: "Am I in the place of God?"

How truly St. John said, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning," even the great duty of forbearance and love (I John ii. 7).

Three thousand years before our Saviour came, Joseph acted out the true principles of the Christian faith; acted out, in a childlike spirit, one of its deepest and most difficult lessons.

Forgiveness is a slow work; and it was only late in life, when the smart of his cruel wrongs had been alleviated by lapse of time, and he had been taught in the school of affliction, that he was able to exhibit the princely spirit, which he did in overlooking the grievous crime of his brethren.

Of the family history of Joseph after this, we know but little, beyond the fact that he continued his kindness towards his brethren and their families. His eyes were gladdened by the sight of Ephraim's children of the third generation; and the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon his knees.

As to the position which Joseph occupied in public life, during his later years, the Scriptures give us no account, but something of interest may be gleaned from Egyptian annals.

Aphophis, the Pharaoh who made Joseph his viceroy, died about ten years after the removal of Jacob and his sons into Egypt. Joseph survived this amiable monarch many years, and he continued to be the prime minister of his successors on the throne, until the infirmities of old age obliged him to withdraw from active life.

It was a peculiar and perilous position which he occupied, a worshipper of the one true God in the midst of an idolatrous nation; but he preserved his integrity unto the end. Neither the cares of his high office, nor the allurements of wealth, nor the desire of popularity, was able to turn him aside from the right way.

The consequence of this consistent course was calmness and peace at the approach of death, and a hope of glory beyond the grave. Calling his surviving brethren to his bed-side, he spoke in a tone of cheerful resignation of his speedy departure from the earth.

Had he consulted worldly policy, or the aggrandizement of his race, his last words would not have been directions which must lead to the unsettling of the Israelites in the friendly soil where they had so firmly taken root.

The vision of Jacob's son, reached, however, far beyond the passing hour. He remembered God's oft-repeated promise to give to His chosen people an inheritance in the land of Canaan.

Joseph showed his faith by acting upon this promise, when he was swaying the sceptre as Pharaoh's viceroy, and when he could only claim a burial-place in the land of his fathers.

We know from our own experience how hard it is to forego a present good upon the assurance of some better thing to come, and we may judge from this of the strength and steadfastness of Joseph's faith. The revelations which were then made of the blessedness of the heavenly Canaan were dim and indistinct compared with these which have been vouchsafed to us. When, therefore, we behold Joseph thus willing to put in jeopardy the temporal prosperity of his tribe by obeying the voice of God with reference to the distant future, we can estimate, in some degree at least, the sincerity of his faith in the promises. "I die," he said to his brethren, "and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (verse 24th). With this prospect in view he took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God shall surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (verse 35th).

The apostle refers to this when he says, "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. xi. 32).

Had this direction been prompted merely by the natural wish which is common to us all, to have our dust

mingled with the dust of our kindred, he would have been carried to the sepulchre, in Canaan without any long delay. His dying command, however, plainly implied that his body, when embalmed, was to remain unburied until the final departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and their permanent establishment in Palestine.

Now, why was this? Evidently, it was that his brethren and children might be constantly reminded by the sight of his unburied bones that Egypt was not their home, and that they were only waiting God's commandment to go forth.

He knew the proneness of human nature to forget the ordinances of the Most High; he saw, perchance, by the aid of prophetic vision, many of those sore afflictions which the future kings of Egypt would bring upon his descendants; and therefore he left his body to speak to them of a deliverance yet to come.

Moreover, the anxiety which Joseph manifested about the disposition to be made of his lifeless remains suggests to us, most naturally, that he knew that the body was by no means wholly and forever destroyed by death. If this were to be the case, what matter whether he should be buried in Egypt or in Canaan? When, however, we regard Joseph as looking forward, by faith, to the general resurrection at the last day, we discover a most satisfactory reason why he should wish to rise up from the grave with those whom he had loved upon earth.

"Joseph's death was like his life,—hidden with God. Egyptian in appearance, Hebrew indeed; accomplished in the town of On, amidst pagan dedications to the sun, but tending to the burying-place of Abraham and the resurrection of the heir of all things. He was one who

was, like all great men, far in advance of his age; as a ruler of men; as a financier: in being capable of being at once an Egyptian patriot and a Hebrew hero. Of no other character presented in all the ancient sacred record is so much told and nothing to his blame" (Bishop Wilberforce).

Joseph's body was embalmed, after the Egyptian custom, and placed in a coffin, the last being a special mark of honor. The sarcophagus containing his remains was no doubt kept in the family of his son Ephraim, and thus preserved until the Israelites were led in triumph out of Egypt by the hand of Moses.

And so we read in the Book of Joshua (xxiv. 32), "The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamon the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph."

As Joshua was a descendant of Joseph he felt bound to carry out the wishes of his great ancestor, and he himself was afterwards buried in the same region (xxiv. 30, 31).

Through the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness and during the wars of Joshua with the inhabitants of Canaan, the coffin of Joseph was borne about from place to place, and, at last, deposited with the bones of his fathers.

Dean Stanley visited this interesting spot in 1862. ("Hist. of Jewish Church," vol. i. p. 546).

The life of Joseph has been recorded with unusual minuteness of detail in the Bible, that his beautiful example may be held up to the admiration of all after times. He unites in himself both the patriarchal and

the gospel dispensations, and even our Divine Lord Himself speaks to us in the history of His obedient child. His old father's foolish partiality would have spoiled him in his youth, but at the early age of seventeen God took him in hand and gave him the bitter cup of adversity to drink.

There was no complaint nor repining on Joseph's part. He showed an unhesitating dependence on God's power, and a constant recognition of it in all he said and did. His reward was the success of every plan, and the realization of every dream. His sufferings, although allowed of God, seemed to be a hard and unjust measure on one who was plainly in the right, while those who were his oppressors were as plainly in the wrong.

In spite of this Joseph was always child-like in his trust. And was he not abundantly repaid? Every thing which heart could desire, or the most soaring ambition could seek after, was in the end bestowed upon him. "He walked along the path which seemed to turn directly from human glory with his face to heaven and his back to the world; it had brought him round unconsciously to another gate leading into the garden of earthly success, which God opened to him as soon as that success had lost its influence over His servant" ("Practical Sermons on the Old Testament").

Happy for all who are willing to make like ventures of faith. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof," is the promise of Him of whom Joseph was the type, "and all other needful things shall be added unto you" (St. Matt. vi. 33).

SERMON XVIII.

JOSEPH A TYPE OF CHRIST.

(*Sexagesima.*)

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)."—GENESIS xlix. 23, 24.

It is remarkable that our blessed Lord is not only seen and heard in the gospels which contain a record of His life on earth, but also in many of the characters of Old Testament history. "Abel speaks of his death; Enoch of His ascension; Melchizedeck of His everlasting priesthood; in Moses He is our lawgiver; in Joshua the captain of our salvation; in Samuel He is the intercessor; in David our king; Solomon of His wisdom in His Church, in hymns, and parables, and precepts; Elijah of His miracles and ascension; Elisha of His quickening the dead; and Joseph of His humiliation, and subsequent exaltation to the right hand of God" (Isaac Williams).

There are such striking points of agreement between the history of Joseph and that of our blessed Lord that, even without any scriptural warrant, it would be hard not to believe that the one was designed to typify and foreshadow the other.

I. Jacob describes Joseph as "a fruitful bough."

This is an allusion to his name, which implies growth and increase; and which may, very properly, be under-

stood of the exalted dignity to which he was finally to attain.

"A fruitful bough by a well," suggests the idea of extraordinary advancement. The "branches running over the wall" denote the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which sprang from Joseph, and were very flourishing.

In Jacob's dying blessing, each tribe is distinguished by something characteristic, either of the patriarchs themselves or of their descendants.

Peculiar fruitfulness is that assigned to Joseph; and while his brethren were all honored by being made heads of tribes, he was not only blessed in a wonderful degree in his own person, but both of his sons were chosen of God to be the heads of distinct tribes.

While Joseph is thus appropriately described as "a fruitful bough," our blessed Lord is spoken of as a "glorious branch," which in after ages should come forth from "the stem of Jesse," and the fruit thereof should fill the whole earth (Isaiah iv. 2; xi. 1; and xxvii. 6).

Not one tribe only should be proud to claim Him as its head, but "all the tribes of the earth" should look to Him, the true Joseph, with longing eyes. The branches of the Fruitful Vine, have, indeed, "run over the wall" which divides nation from nation, and sheds forth its rich sweetness through every land.

II. We discover further evidence that Joseph was a type of Christ *in the suffering he was called upon to endure.*

Was Joseph greatly beloved of his father, who doted upon him with a devoted heart? So was Jesus the "beloved Son" of the Father, in whom He was well pleased (St. Matt. iii. 17).

Did Joseph, when his own purity of heart was shocked

by the dissolute habits of his brethren, gently reprove them for their faults, and report their misconduct to their father? So did Jesus testify to His own countrymen that their works were evil (St. John vii. 7).

Do we find Joseph relating to his scornful brethren the intimations he had received in dreams concerning his future greatness? Hear the amazing declaration of Jesus, when referring to a far more glorious exaltation which awaited Himself: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (St. Matt. xxvi. 64).

Was Joseph envied and hated by his brethren on account of the personal distinction vouchsafed him? So was Jesus rewarded with hatred for His love; His own countrymen saying, in the bitterness of their malignity, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him!" (St. Matt. xxi. 38.)

As the anxious patriarch sent Joseph to inquire after the welfare of his brethren while feeding their flocks in the distant pastures of Shechem, so did the Almighty Father commission His well-beloved Son to ask of the descendants of those very men, "Where is the flock that was given thee,—thy beautiful flock?" (Jer. xiii. 20.)

When Joseph came to his brethren on this errand of love, they mocked him as a silly dreamer, who fancied himself a ruler over them. Jesus met with the same reception, being reviled for presuming to claim for Himself the title of king.

Did Joseph's brethren sell him to strangers for twenty pieces of silver? We have the counterpart of this in the gospel record: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men" (St. Matt. xvii. 22); and in the prophetic

language of the psalm, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (xli. 9).

Was Joseph charged with a crime which his righteous soul abhorred, and without any one to speak a word in his defence cruelly cast into prison? So Jesus was accused of rebellion against the civil authority, and of blasphemy; and although innocent as a lamb; He was instantly condemned.

Was Joseph stripped of his coat of many colors, preparatory to further indignities to be heaped upon him? In like manner was Jesus deprived of His vesture, as one of the methods of exposing Him to the scorn of the multitude.

Was Joseph cast into prison, galled with fetters, and obliged to associate with the depraved inmates of a dungeon? Jesus, also, was "numbered with the transgressors" (Is. liii. 12), and condemned like the vilest malefactor to suffer the death of a slave. Did Joseph preserve his dignity, and prove himself useful, even while an inmate of his prison-house? Thus did Jesus, amidst the ignominy of the cross, open the gates of Paradise to the penitent thief.

We are astonished at the forbearance of Joseph, who made no mention of the cruelty of his brethren; but still more must we be struck with the conduct of that Divine Redeemer, who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (Is. liii. 7).

We pass from this rapid glance at the sufferings of Joseph, which render him so remarkable a type of Christ, to another wonderful resemblance, in

III. *His glorious advancement.*

By the gracious working of God's providence, Joseph was enabled to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and to make that thoughtful arrangement for a series of dreary years, in which famine must be endured, and thus preserving multitudes from death. A wonderful change, indeed, when the captive came forth from the dungeon to be declared the second ruler in Egypt, and all were commanded to bow the knee before him! "It was a transition which accurately imaged that of the Redeemer, who, springing from the prison of the grave, became possessed in His mediatorial capacity of all power in heaven and earth, and yet so possessed as to be subordinate to the Father, to whom at length He will render up His delegated authority. Like Joseph, he was highly exalted, and received 'a name above every name,' to which it was commanded that every knee should bow; but, like Joseph, there was one subordinate to the Divine, and appointed to be lord in it when its end shall have been answered" (Melvill).

Was the direction given to all the starving ones who came for a supply of corn, "Go to Joseph"? In like manner, whatever may be the necessities of our suffering souls we are told to look to Jesus for help (Isa. xlv. 22, and St. John vii. 37).

When Joseph made himself known to his brethren they were filled with dismay at the remembrance of their heartless cruelty towards him.

How can we ever forget that we also are "guilty concerning our brother," inasmuch as it was our sins which helped to nail Him to the cross?

Joseph spoke kind and encouraging words to his brethren.

ren, saying, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, . . . for God did send me before you to preserve life." Thus, also, did Jesus, in the midst of His dying agonies, pray for His murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Joseph would not return blow for blow. The spirit of love and forgiveness possessed his soul. "He kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them." We can not say that we have not sinned as Joseph's brethren did, and that there is no Joseph to forgive our multiplied offences.

We have only to change the names, and, instead of being mere spectators, we shall really be actors in the scene. The Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from ignominy to glory, has far better treasure than all the treasures of Egypt; and thrice happy they whom He, the true Joseph, shall nourish with the bread of life!

The last clause of the text is an uncommon one: "*From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.*" In other words, from the Divine Providence extended over the events of Joseph's life, he became the nourisher of his father's family; thus acting the part of a shepherd; while, as upholding them in their troubles, he served the purpose of a foundation; and hence his title, "*The Stone of Israel.*"

Our blessed Lord, the true Joseph, accomplished the same ends for His people. As their kind and tender Shepherd He leads them forth into green pastures, and by cool and refreshing streams; even in times of dearth providing for them abundantly.

If Joseph was honored with the title of "The Stone of Israel," how much more appropriately may it be applied to Him of whom it is written, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried

stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. xxviii. 16).

You all remember the touching scene in Joseph's life when he made himself known to his brethren. The day is near at hand, when He of whom Joseph was the type, our Elder Brother, shall reveal Himself to us. It depends upon ourselves whether it shall be in the character of a kind and gracious Saviour, or as a strict and avenging Judge.

To all of us He still stretches out the hand of welcome. There has been no "Yea and Nay" in our Redeemer; no drawing back from any thing which He has pledged Himself to do (2 Cor. i. 19). Every promise He has made may be confidently pleaded at the throne of grace.

SERMON XIX.

OUR WORDS TO JUSTIFY, OR CONDEMN.

(*Quinquagesima.*)

“By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”—ST. MATTHEW xii. 37.

WE may all well tremble, when we hear our blessed Lord make this emphatic statement. No idle, irreverent, ill-tempered, impure, unholy word which we have ever spoken, has passed away, like the fleeting wind, or like water poured upon the thirsty ground.

“’Tis written with an iron pen,
And we shall hear it yet again!”

Words are regarded in the Bible as works: good words, like good works, will be rewarded by the Lord; bad words, like bad works, He will punish.

“Death and life,” says the wise man, “are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Prov. xviii. 21).

How clearly this is set forth in public responsibilities! When witnesses testify in court; when the judge gives his legal decision; when false or true teachers proclaim their doctrines to the world, we see that death or life is in the power of the tongue.

A few moments could not be put to better use than

in considering some of the ways by which words are spoken that minister to our condemnation.

I. At the very head of this list, we must put profane swearing.

There will be less need for saying much about it, since all well-disposed people entertain but one opinion concerning it. Profane swearing is only fit to be the language of demons, and they who persist in giving way to it, may count upon conversing with lost spirits, in the world of woe.

A plain-spoken man once said to another who was cursing himself at a terrible rate,

"Friend, do you know what Amen means?"

"To be sure I do," he answered: "it means, so be it."

"Then," said he, "how angry you would be if any one should say Amen to the curses you have pronounced against your eyes and limbs. If God should happen to say Amen, what will become of you?"

The rebuke was received in good part, and the profane swearer set about curing himself of so shameful a habit.

O sinner, it is the Lord Jesus, thy Saviour and thy Judge, who says to thee, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, or condemned."

II. Another way in which we expose ourselves to God's displeasure is by what St. Paul calls "foolish talking" (Eph. v. 4).

He means by this, a sort of senseless, insipid chit-chat, unworthy of beings who are capable of better things. St. Paul's idea is, that the conversation of Christians should be sensible and serious. He by no means objects to cheerfulness or pleasantry.

One might not be ready to sanction, in the lump, all that such a man as Sydney Smith said and did; and yet we can not but number him among the world's benefactors, so much did he help to lighten its vexing cares, by a happy infusion of genial mirth. The old Greeks loved a good joke, seasoned with wit and grace; but under this outer adorning, an impure and debasing thought was, too often, concealed. Would that it could be said, that this evil habit was peculiar to them!

"The most miserable thing on earth," as has been truly said, "is a bad man's fun. There they are, ten men in a bar-room. They have at home, wives, mothers, daughters. The impure jest starts at one corner of the bar-room, and crackle, it goes all around. They all feel bemeaned, if they have any conscience left. . . . All merriment that springs out of the defects of others—caricature of a lame foot, or a curved spine, or a blind eye, or a deaf ear,—will be met with the judgments of God, either upon you, or your children" (Talmage).

There is, also, a disposition to indulge in "foolish talking" on sacred things, which can not be too carefully avoided.

Among the many friends which Charles Kingsley won for himself among people of all grades, were some army officers, who came from the camp to Eversley church, and at whose head-quarters he was often invited to mess. On one occasion, he encountered, at the dinner-table, a so-called "advanced thinker," in religion; which has come to be regarded as but another name for superficial learning, and overweening self-conceit. The conversation soon drifted into the current of irreverent and flippant ridicule of religion, when Mr. Kings-

ley stopped it at once and forever, by pointing out how unmanly and ungenerous it was, to endeavor to weaken a faith which was a trusted support to one's friends.

III. Another example of the improper use of the gift of speech, is an indulgence in the petulant and complaining language which so often destroys the harmony of private life. The out-door world may not be aware of the existence of these petty disturbances within; but this only shows that the tongue can be curbed by the mere exercise of the will.

Many a husband and father has been absolutely driven from his family and fireside, to seek quiet and enjoyment in places of dissipation, by the incessant and unreasonable complaints of one who ought to have tried to render home the centre of attraction and delight.

Many a heart-broken wife has dragged out a wretched existence, even when surrounded by abundance, because the head of the household gave way to a crusty, overbearing disposition, and who, instead of sharing and lessening her trials, has only helped to increase them.

Many a child has lost all respect for parental advice, and spurned, without compunction, parental authority, because of the disagreements and bickerings between those who should have studied the things which make for peace, and whereby one may minister to the happiness of another.

IV. A fourth illustration of our text is found in the case of misrepresentation and slander. This species of mischief may be so adroitly done, that it is a hopeless task to arraign the offender, and bring him to justice.

"You could not fasten upon any word or sentence, and say that it was calumny; for in order to constitute

slander it is not necessary that the word spoken should be false—half truths are often more calumnious than whole falsehoods. It is not even necessary that a word should be distinctly uttered: a dropped lip, an arched eyebrow, a shrugged shoulder, a significant look, an incredulous expression of countenance;—nay, even an emphatic silence, may do the work; and when the light and trifling thing which has done the mischief has fluttered off, the venom is left behind, to work and rankle, to inflame hearts, and to poison human society at the fountain springs of life” (Robertson).

There is a machine in the museum at Venice, by which some forgotten Italian tyrant used to shoot poisoned needles at the objects of his hatred. How much worse was he than the unscrupulous agent of slander, to whom the great Judge of all is heard to say: “By thy words thou shalt be condemned?”

V. Angry words are another description of words by which we may endanger our everlasting salvation.

Of course you will not understand me as teaching that it is always wrong to be angry, since this is far from being the case. Like the other passions, it was implanted in us by our Maker to serve some good end; and St. Paul tells us that there are times when it is even our duty to be angry (Eph. iv. 26).

Anger in the Divine Being is righteous indignation against sin; and what is affirmed of God more than three hundred times in the Bible can not of itself be wrong in man who is created in his Maker's image. The right to be angry is freely granted, but it is coupled with this limitation, that we should be angry rightly.

Moses was cool and collected in his own cause, but

not so in God's. And, so, none of us have any real zeal for the Lord, who can hear His name, His attributes, or His Church, spoken evil of, without a feeling of righteous indignation. When it comes to speaking in angry tones on our own account, we must beware lest we pass over the proper bounds.

Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, once got so thoroughly out of patience with a dull scholar, that he spoke to him with unusual sharpness. The mortified lad looked up and said, "Why do you speak angrily, sir? Indeed, I am doing the best I can."

Years after, the teacher used to tell this story on himself, and say, "I never felt so ashamed in my life. That look and that speech I shall never forget."

The angry man is often punished at the time, by the very outburst of his own ungoverned temper, like stones pulled down in wanton mischief from some old ruin, which fall upon him who so thoughtlessly disturbed them.

To speak gently may often be a sore trial, but it is always safe.

"Speak gently to the aged one,
Grieve not the care-worn heart;
The sands of life are nearly run,
Let such in peace depart.

"Speak gently, kindly, to the poor;
Let no harsh tone be heard;
They have enough they must endure
Without an unkind word.

"Speak gently to the erring; know
They may have toiled in vain;
Perchance unkindness made them so;
Oh, win them back again.

“Speak gently! ’tis a little thing
Dropped in the heart’s deep well;
The good, the joy, which it may bring,
Eternity shall tell.”

No one can preach a sermon from the text which has been the subject of this one, no one can listen to a sermon from it, without a sense of self-condemnation. If the very words which we speak in our familiar intercourse with each other, are to exert such an influence upon our future state, we can not begin too soon to watch the door of our lips with anxious diligence.

Happy are the friends of those whose conversation “ministers grace to the hearers.” It may not be always grave and serious; it may even dance and sparkle like a mountain stream in the cheerful sunlight; but it is always innocent and pure.

The conceited ascetic on the Syrian mountains, who preserved an unbroken silence for seven long years, fancied that he was pleasing God; but rest assured that they are pleasing Him best, who, by wise and gentle words, are teaching and encouraging the ignorant and the down-hearted.

SERMON XX.

PURIFICATION.

(Ash Wednesday.)

“Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”—I John iii. 3.

It is certainly not one of the least gratifying signs of the times, that the holy season of Lent is now so generally observed. Many of us can remember when the attendance upon such services, even in large towns, was small and discouraging, and when a few devout women were expected to discharge its obligations for the whole community. Men were supposed to be too busy, or too lukewarm, to give themselves any concern about it.

Now, thank God, there has been such an outpouring of His Spirit, that multitudes flock to the house of prayer, and it seems no longer a solemn mockery to read the soul-stirring exhortation in the Epistle for Ash Wednesday: “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children.”

Other bodies of Christians have fallen into the time-honored custom of keeping Good Friday and Easter; and the appointment of weeks of prayer for a more importunate supplication for God's grace, is gradually preparing the way for the universal observance of Lent.

This season is set apart by the Church as a special and appropriate time for turning unto God. We are all of us more or less worldly-minded; and it is an evidence of the faithfulness of our holy mother to her children, that thus, year by year, she stirs up our slumbering souls, and speaks to us of the necessity of conversion,—of conversion in its truest sense,—a turning from wrong to right.

When we give ourselves time for sober thought, the Blessed Spirit is ready “to put into our minds good desires;” and if we will submit ourselves to His heavenly guidance, He will enable us “*to bring the same to good effect.*” The only reason why this end is not oftener accomplished is because people resist the Holy Ghost. He never flatters nor deceives, but convinces of sin; and this is not always pleasant to those who desire to continue in it.

When an old minister died, in a Scotch village, and a young man came to take his place, he began his career by a very plain and searching sermon on the sins of the day. As soon as the service was over, the gray-headed beadle said to him in a confidential tone, “Young man, if you wish to be popular, don’t speak about the sins of this people, but about the sins of Isaac and Jacob, and the sinners of two thousand years ago. They will like you then. They won’t stand hearing about the sins of the present day.”

We think better things of you, dear friends, and we account your presence here to-day, as evidence that you do really desire to turn unto God. This is the attitude of all right-minded people. St. John sets forth the whole unvarnished truth when he says in the text, “*Every*

man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

A Christian who deserves the name can not wilfully live in known sin; but he will search out his corruptions, in order that he may set about subduing them. He has chosen the Lord Jesus Christ as his pattern; and while he can never hope to reach perfection in this world, he will always be striving after it. A sense of gratitude, and a love of holiness will make him unwilling to pretend to be the child of God, while he acts like a child of the devil. So far from magnifying his own good qualities, he will constantly look up to his Divine Pattern, and feel humbled at his short-comings.

Pliny tells us that Zeuxis once painted a boy holding a dish of grapes in his hand, and the work was so skilfully done, that the birds flew at the ripe clusters, and tried to peck them. The beholders looked on in admiration, but the painter was not satisfied with the result. "Had I painted the boy as well as he ought to have been painted," he said, "the birds would have been afraid to touch them."

And so the Christian, while he thanks God that he has been enabled to make some progress in the divine life, never glories, as though he were already perfect. Even the sun in the firmament shows dark spots, and the skies are often covered with sombre draping.

Hope is the mainspring of human actions; but in order that it may accomplish any important purpose, it must have some special object in view. St. John refers to such an object in the text. It is the hope of being "the sons of God," and so walking before Him, in pureness of living and truth, that when the glorified Redeemer comes at the

last day to reward His faithful children, we "may be made like unto Him." Aye, like unto Him, in His eternal and glorious kingdom.

This hope, St. John tells us, leads people to do something. And what? That a few men and women, here and there, should retire to the desert, or the cell, for an unceasing round of penitential psalms and litanies? No; it is something which is of universal obligation. "Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself." Every one will make it the business of his life to accomplish this great work.

And so, in the Old Testament and in the New, this duty is imperatively enjoined: "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit," says the Lord, by the mouth of His prophet (Ezek. xviii. 31).

"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded," writes St. James (iv. 8).

Not that we can do this of ourselves. Sanctification is the work of God's Holy Spirit. It is He who creates a new heart within us, and renews the soul after His own image. "Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself," by the use of those means which God Himself has appointed. The experience of countless millions of believers, through long ages, has abundantly shown that a well-spent Lent is a most important assistance in the work. Every one that purifieth himself will strive not only to be outwardly moral, but to be inwardly holy.

There is something in holiness very different from what the world calls morality and virtue. These last seek to build up a standard of good, without regard to any help from God; while holiness proclaims, without hesitation or reserve, its complete surrender to Him, and a

childlike dependence on His grace. "There is no stability and settled persistency of righteous purpose possible for us, unless we are made strong because we lay hold on God's strength, and stand firm because we are rooted in Him. If my spirit is to be holy and to preserve its holiness, it must be firm. A man who has not learned to say 'no,'—who is not resolved that he will take God's way in spite of every silvery voice that woos him aside, will be a weak and wretched man till he dies. In such a world as this, with such hearts as ours, weakness is wickedness in the long run" (Maclaren).

At this beginning of Lent, let each one who is anxious to "purify himself," ask very honestly what is the special besetting sin which hinders him from becoming pure, and then declare deadly war against it. Be it pride, or an inordinate love of the world, or an ungoverned temper, or jealousy, or impurity, or the foul demon of strong drink, or ambition, or dishonesty, or what not, lay the axe lustily at the root of that particular tree, and by vigorous and repeated blows, cut it down. This work can be done, and well done, without going out of the world, or neglecting any of its imperative duties.

"We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbors and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky."

(KEBLE.)

At the same time, we must allow our souls a fair chance. They are worth too much to be thrown away. We must watch the beginnings of evil, if we are to make any steady advance in the work of purification.

What profound knowledge of the human heart Thomas a Kempis displays in this single sentence, describing the growth of temptation: "First there cometh to the mind a bare thought, then a strong imagination of evil, then a delight thereof, and an evil motion, and then consent; and so by little and little our wicked enemy getteth complete entrance, whilst he is not resisted at the beginning."

We are shocked almost every day by a fresh report of human weakness and guilt, and that, too, on the part of those who once were no weaker nor guiltier than ourselves. They were unwatchful, self-confident, and presumptuous, and the devil lured them onward to ruin. The treacherous enemy is lurking in our own hearts; and if we allow him the opportunity, he will not be slow to convince us of his power.

The old monks used to tell that there was once a man in Egypt, who was afflicted with a very violent temper. Anxious to get rid of it, he first sought refuge in a monastery, but here he was often provoked to anger by his brethren as he had been by daily intercourse with the world. As a last resort, he abandoned the society of men and abode in the desert, his only possession an earthen bowl, with which to dip water from the spring. Thrice in one day, while carrying the vessel to his rude shelter, his foot slipped and the water was spilled. Suddenly his old enemy got the better of him, and he shivered the bowl into atoms. When his anger had cooled, he looked in mortification at the broken bowl and said, "O fool that I am! How can I escape the temptation which is in my nature? If I have not men to be angry with, I rage against an earthen bowl!"

"How can I escape the temptation which is in my

nature?" Yes; that is the question for us all. The more careful we are in the keeping of Lent, the more successful we shall be in finding the answer.

St. Francis de Sales has quaintly said, that "as the mother pearls live in the sea without receiving one drop of salt water, and as the fire-fly flies in the flames without burning its wings, so a vigorous and constant soul may live in the world without participating of any worldly humor; may fly among the flames of earthly concupiscences without burning the wings of the sacred desires of a devout life."

And now, dear friends, having offered these general remarks on a subject so important for us all, we ask you to encourage us by your regular attendance on these Lenten services, which have been arranged, so far as possible, to suit the convenience of the greater number. The complaint on the part of so many ladies that they could not attend the night services, for want of an escort, is obviated this year, by having more of them in the afternoon, and this, too, at such a reasonable hour, that business men on their way home, can stop and take part in them.

It is very poor encouragement, when the clergy do their very best to provide for the spiritual needs of their flocks, to hear that their people are going off to fill other places of worship, and thus saying, in the most significant way, that they find more satisfactory services elsewhere. The running from church to church during the Lenten Season, is mere religious dissipation, and is one secret why more substantial good is not gained from its observance.

The Christian who attends upon the stated services in his own parish church, and who spends his spare hours

at home in reading a good book, which will teach him something worth knowing about his Church, and in the use of a manual of devotions like that of Bishop Wilson or Bishop Andrews, will draw much nearer to God and do more for his soul, than one who listens to an eloquent sermon from St. Chrysostom or St. Ambrose, twice a day.

The milk and water religion of our time consists much more in the gratifying of itching ears, than in the growth of the soul in the divine life.

If this Lenten Season is not a profitable one for you, it will not be because we have not tried to make it so.

SERMON XXI.

GOD'S PLAN FOR MAKING US HAPPY.

(First Sunday in Lent.)

“God sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”—ACTS iii. 26.

WE are told, in a simple allegory, that when man was made in the image of God, one of the bright angels about the throne was appointed to wait upon him, and to be his constant companion. After this beautiful image had been marred by sin, Happiness could no longer recognize the Heavenly Father's likeness upon earth, and pined to go back to her happy home on high. Fallen and wretched man now wandered about searching for a friend to make good his loss. He looked on the fair face of Nature, and saw her gay and cheerful; but Nature, assured him that she could offer no alleviation for his misery. Love appeared so bright and joyous, that man, in his disappointment, turned next to her; but she timidly shrank back at his approach, while her tender eyes overflowed with tears of sympathy. He now sought Friendship, and she sighed and answered, “Caprice, anxiety, and the fear of change, are ever before me.” Disappointed at these repeated failures, man followed after Vice, who boasted loudly, and promised great things; but even while she talked with him, the borrowed roses dropped from her withered brow, and disclosed the wrin-

kles of sorrow and the deep furrows plowed by pain. Retreating in haste from the haunts of the vile enchantress, he now sought for Virtue, hoping that the secret of happiness might be learned from her; but she assured him that Penitence was her proper name, and that she was powerless to bestow the boon he craved. Brought down at last to the verge of despair, man applied to grim Death, who relaxed his forbidding aspect, while he answered with a smile: "Happiness can no longer be found upon the earth. I am really the friend of man, and the guide to the blessedness which his heart yearns after. Harken to the voice of Him who died on the cross of Calvary, and I will, at last, lead man through the shades of the dark valley to the delectable mountains, where Happiness makes her perpetual abode."

The allegory which I have thus tried to repeat, is a mere expansion of the text: "*God sent His Son Jesus to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*"

Here then in few words is the plan proposed by our Heavenly Father to make us happy; a plan well worthy to be considered.

I. God does not secure happiness to His people by making all of them rich. Instead of saying, "Blessed are ye rich," He says, "Blessed are the poor."

The only really happy rich man, is the one who acts as God's steward, paying his lawful tithes to the Church, and dealing kindly with the suffering poor.

"Money will buy plenty, but not peace; money will furnish your table with luxuries, but not you with an appetite to enjoy them; money will surround your bed with physicians, but not restore health to your sickly

frame: it will encompass you with a crowd of flatterers, but never promise you one true friend; it will bribe into silence the tongues of accusing men, but not an accusing conscience; it will pay some debts, but not one, the least, of your debts to the law of God; it will relieve many fears, but not those of guilt, the terrors that crown the hour of death" (Guthrie).

II. Our Heavenly Father does not propose to make us happy by bestowing on us the empty honors of the world.

It is true, multitudes covet these distinctions, and foolishly imagine that happiness is to be found in the possession of them; but experience always proves how grievously they were mistaken.

The devil seems to have persuaded himself that even the Son of God could be tempted by such a bribe, when he promised Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, for one act of worship offered to himself.

A mandarin puffed up with a sense of his high position, was fond of appearing in the public streets, sparkling with jewels. He was annoyed, one day, by an uncouth personage, who followed him about, bowing often to the ground, and thanking him for his jewels.

"What does the man mean?" cried the mandarin; "I never gave you any of my jewels."

"No," returned the other; "but you have let me look at them, and that is all the use you can make of them yourself. The only difference between us is, that you have the trouble of watching them."

III. God's plan for making His people happy does not consist in affording them a large share of worldly pleasure.

"She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5. 6).

Most of the things which are called "worldly pleasures," not only fail to make people happy, but leave positive misery behind them. And then, the terrible phantom, which, in moments of solitude and silence, must disturb the minds of the most frivolous,—the end; when God shall bring all these things into judgment.

When the Chevalier Gerard De Kampis, a rich and proud man, had finished his magnificent castle, he gave a great entertainment to all his wealthy neighbors. At the close of the sumptuous banquet, the guests made speech after speech, lauding their host to the skies, and declaring him to be the happiest of men. As the chevalier loved flattery, this fragrant incense was most acceptable; and nothing disturbed his equanimity, until one of the guests who had, thus far, kept silence, gravely remarked:

"Sir Knight, in order that your felicity should be complete, you require but one thing, but this is a very important item."

"And what thing is that?" demanded the astonished nobleman.

"One of your doors must be walled up," replied his guest.

At this strange rejoinder, several of the guests laughed aloud, and while Gerard himself began to think the man was mad, he preserved self-control enough to ask:

"Which door do you mean?"

"I mean that through which you will one day be carried to your grave," was the answer.

The words struck both guests and host, and the

proud man saw the vanity of all earthly things, and began from that moment to lay up treasure in Heaven.

It is not, then, by making His people rich, or great, or renowned, that God proposes to secure happiness for them, but by sending His Son Jesus Christ, "to turn away every one of them from his iniquities."

There can be no salvation for us, unless we are delivered from our sins. God only makes men happy by making them holy. The object of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh was, that He might "save His people from their sins" (St. Matt. i. 21).

Lycurgus would allow none of his laws to be written, insisting that the principles of government must be interwoven with the lives and manners of the people, as the only sure way of promoting their happiness.

He who would abide by the commandments of God, must be able to say with David, "Thy word have I hid within my heart."

He who will be received into the presence of God and enjoy the blessedness of Heaven, is "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24).

We are made heirs of glory only by putting on Christ; but we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints," through a studied and careful conformity to the Divine precept; "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Say of no sin, however trivial it may appear, "Is it not a little one?" but following after holiness, let evil under every possible disguise, be your abhorrence.

God proposes to bless us by sending His dear Son to "turn away every one of us from his iniquities;" and in order thus to "turn" us, He employs a variety of influ-

ences and agencies. In short, He is so desirous that we should be happy here, and happy hereafter, that He leaves no means untried.

God sends abundant mercies to all of us, to lead us to repentance. He visits us with trials and bereavements, as gentle and necessary reminders that this is not our home, but that we are seeking one to come. He sends the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin, and to inspire us with desires after holiness. He sends forth His chosen messengers into all lands, preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He has given us the Bible, His own blessed word, to help us to become wise unto salvation.

If we will but improve these privileges, we may all be happy; and we can become happy in no other way.

Patrick Henry, whose impassioned eloquence put an end to the painful indecision which stood in the way of our national independence, closed his will with these sensible words: "I have now disposed of all my property to my family; there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."

The question of our eternal happiness is quite too weighty to be left in doubt; and if we are wise, we shall ask of our own hearts, whether or not we have turned away from our iniquities.

It is one of the delusions practiced on us by the devil, to make us look at our sins one by one, when they seem small and trivial, instead of regarding them as a whole, as God does.

When the besotted king of Babylon, in his proud

feast, brought forth the holy vessels which belonged to the Temple at Jerusalem, and committed the awful sacrilege of using them in his drunken carousal, the fingers of a man's hand appeared upon the wall of the banqueting-room, writing down his doom.

The wretched prince had kept no account of his sins, as a spendthrift makes no record of his debts, and is all unmindful of them, until the greatness of the amount accomplishes his ruin.

Every impenitent sinner is fast out-running God's mercy, and it is not always the greatest sin which fills up the measure of iniquity, and causes the cup of Divine vengeance to overflow.

Confess as often as you can, during this holy season of Lent, with the people of God assembled in His house, and still oftener in the privacy of your own closet, that you may know your besetting sins, and struggle more resolutely against them. "Cheat yourself with no flighty excuses, as that feeling is every thing, and the act nothing; but put the feeling and the act together, the spirit's worship and the body's worship, just as the blameless Saviour Himself did, giving you an example that you should follow His steps; just as His holy apostles and saintly followers have done after Him! Not only couple confession with self-examination, but self-examination with prayer, and prayer with self-denial, and self-denial with inward charity, and inward charity with larger offerings on God's altar, unloosing heavy burdens and dealing bread to the hungry" (Bishop Huntington).

Thus coming near to God in ways of His own appointment, we may feel sure of His grace and blessing.

SERMON XXII.

THE APOSTASY OF DEMAS.

(Second Sunday in Lent.)

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."—II TIMOTHY iv. 10.

IN the long line of the Doges, in the grand old palace in Venice, one space is empty, and the black curtain which covers it, attracts more attention than any one of the fine portraits of the merchant kings. From that panel, now so unsightly, once smiled the sallow face of Marino Falieri, afterwards found guilty of treason against the state, and blotted out, so far as might be, from remembrance.

The text reveals the fate of one who had filled a much more honored place, and who, yielding to temptation, sank to still lower depths. Poor, foolish Demas has gained for himself a most unenviable notoriety.

Once he was not only a church-member, but he was accounted as no ordinary man among his brethren. Twice in the friendly salutations with which St. Paul usually closes his epistles he mentions Demas with honor. In one of these he calls him a "fellow-laborer in the gospel" (Philemon v. 24); and in the other, having spoken of Demas in the same kindly terms as he did of St. Luke (Coloss. iv. 14), he gives to another minister a solemn warning on account of his slackness in

duty; leaving the conclusion a very natural one, that the apostle saw no occasion for such an admonition in the case of Demas. Two years later St. Paul wrote, in sorrow of heart, to St. Timothy, the youthful Bishop of Ephesus: "*Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me; for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*"

Had the apostle's mournful tidings been only these; that Demas was not as zealous and devoted as he had been; or that he had grievously erred in some points of duty, there would have been no special occasion for surprise.

How many pages in the lives of the best of men are blotted and blurred, with the mortifying evidences of their failings and infirmities.

The case of Demas was far worse than this. He had actually forsaken St. Paul in his utmost extremity; forsaken him, when, shut up in a dungeon and awaiting the hour of his martyrdom, he most needed sympathy and succor.

Nor was this all. In forsaking this devoted servant of God, Demas had also forsaken his Lord and Master. And what had been the occasion of this shameful and presumptuous step? St. Paul answers the question in the text. "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*"

The time was one which tried men's souls; for it was a season of bloody persecution, and the Christians in imperial Rome were in hourly peril for their lives. Many had already been miserably murdered, and many ruthlessly driven from the city.

No wonder that panic took possession of some, and that cowardly desertion was to be charged against others.

Paul, the aged, heard all this, in his dismal prison-house, and he wrote in the anguish of his soul, "All men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (II Tim. iv. 16).

He had hoped better things of some; especially of men like Demas, who had stood so high in his favor, and upon whom he had bestowed marked tokens of regard. Vain expectation! Demas had proved himself as faithless as the rest. It was neither cowardice nor self-indulgence which had caused his ruin, but simply the love of the world; the very danger to which so many are exposed in our own day, when the beguiling blandishments of sin, rather than the terrors of persecution, are the devil's most successful devices.

There is no shadow of a reason to suppose that Demas had not devoted himself at the outset in downright sincerity and earnestness to God's service; but his weakness was such as might prove the ruin of any one who does not keep every avenue to his heart diligently guarded, lest an inordinate love of temporal things force an entrance there.

It is recorded of the king of Navarre, then claiming to be a good Protestant, that being urged by Beza to behave himself in a more manly way for the cause of God, he made answer, that he was "really the friend of the reformers, but that he was resolved to put out no further to sea than he might get safely back to shore in case a storm should unexpectedly arise." In other words, he would not hazard his hopes of the crown of France, for the sake of his religion.

You know the sequel of his story. Like Demas, he loved "this present world" better than he loved God.

He proved a traitor to his religion, and bartered his heavenly crown, for a fading one of earth.

The world promises comforts, and pays its votaries in sorrows. No one can serve two masters. Demas made the experiment, and failed.

If one could do his duty and be religious without trouble or sacrifice, probably most people would be Christians, since all would wish to enjoy a quiet conscience, and to feel sure of eternal bliss.

This, then, is the great question to be settled: which world do we choose for our portion; this one, or the next? There are not many steps between Demas and Judas!

It may very fairly be granted that we are created with certain affections, and that the present world offers various objects exactly suited to gratify our cravings.

"Must we then cease to be flesh and blood?" an objector will be ready to ask; "cease to love what it seems most natural that we should love?"

I answer that it is a most unrighteous misrepresentation of the gospel system, when any one ventures to assert that it leaves our natural affections without any suitable objects to meet their demands.

Christianity deals with us as with beings whose affections must have an object on which they can be fixed, and it sets God before us in the aspect best calculated to attract us. While it forbids an engrossing love of the perishing world, it invites us to set our hearts on what is unspeakably more deserving of our esteem.

How many, like short-sighted Demas, lose the incorruptible, that they may enjoy the transient delights of earth!

Some years ago, a young woman was hanged in England for murder, who had been tempted to commit the awful deed for the sake of a five pound note, and this note proved to be a counterfeit! To run such a risk, and to receive such bitter wages!

Do those people fare better than this wretched woman, who desert God's service for the world's poor bribes? Can the possession of hoards of wealth, or the fading memories of past enjoyments, bring peace in a dying hour?

An Arab lost his way in the desert, and was in danger of perishing from hunger, when he was fortunate enough to reach a brackish well, and close by he discovered a little leather bag.

"Ah! here's just what I need," he cried, with joy; "dates, or nuts, to appease my gnawing hunger!"

He hastily opened the bag, but only to cast it away with contempt. It was filled with pearls! What value did they possess for one who was about to die?

Just as much as the world will be to those who have sold every thing else to gain it.

We generally think and speak of Demas as hopelessly lost, and, where the Scriptures are silent, it is never safe to venture far in the line of mere conjecture. There is, however, one little ray of hope, and to this we gladly turn. We know that John Mark, who was the travelling companion of Paul and Barnabas, forsook those holy men in a trying time, and "went no more with them to the work" (Acts xiii. 13, and xv. 38). And yet, there is a pleasant record afterwards which almost blots out from memory the painful one. In the very next words which follow the text, in which St. Paul tells Timothy of the shameful apostasy of Demas, he conveys the joy-

ful tidings concerning John Mark, once an apostate also,—
“Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

May we not cherish the hope, that as the fault of Demas was the same with that of Mark, the repentance of Mark may have had its parallel in that of Demas?

Whether this be so or not, there is still this comfort for every one of us; that if, unhappily, through worldliness or for any other cause we have forsaken the Lord, the door of mercy is not yet closed against us. The voice of our merciful Father is heard to say, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely” (Jeremiah iii. 22, and Hosea xiv. 4).

Mr. Ralph Wells tells a beautiful incident of his visit to a State Convention in Minnesota. After one of the sessions, a little girl came forward timidly, and presented him with a small bouquet of dandelions, an ordinary flower, but early, and the only sort she could get at that time in the season. He asked why she gave him the bouquet.

“Because I love you,” the child answered.

“Do you bring any little gifts to Jesus?” he inquired.

“Oh!” said the little girl, while a cherub smile lighted up her face, “I give myself to Him!”

No one need ever fear of becoming like Demas, in his apostasy, while he can say that!

SERMON XXIII.

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

(Third Sunday in Lent.)

“They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.”—HOSEA vii. 14.

AN experienced traveller who was leaving home on a dangerous journey took the precaution to provide himself with a life-preserver of the most approved style. Every night, before going to rest, it was carefully blown up and placed near his pillow. Soon after entering the great Mississippi an alarming accident befel the boat, the night being dark and tempestuous, and “the father of waters” angry and disturbed. All on board made ready as best they could, for the perils which beset them. Those who had been thoughtful enough to provide themselves with life-preservers were comparatively calm and composed; but no words can describe the terror and dismay of such as had ventured on board with no precaution against the perils of steamboat travelling.

“What a fool I was,” said one, “that I came off from home without a life-preserver! I always meant to get one. They were offered for sale before my eyes every day!”

“I did not believe that there was any real danger,” cried another. “I had passed over these waters time and again, and I thought I might venture as usual.”

A third, who hurriedly dragged his life-preserver from his valise, found, to his dismay, that it had been rendered utterly worthless by neglect.

A gay young man who had no life-preserver of his own, applied to a fellow-passenger who had one, to try the rash experiment whether his life-preserver could not save them both. The hasty reply was, that it was impossible.

These distressing details need not be dwelt upon. Those already given will suffice to convince you, that when called to encounter dangers, every possible precaution should be taken beforehand. Seasons of peril and distress often wring from the most hardened, expressions of sorrow and remorse.

These are to be attributed, for the most part, to the alarming perplexity in which they are involved, and differ widely from the heart-felt supplications of the humble and contrite. The insincerity and worthlessness of such appeals are set forth in the text: "*They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.*"

The procrastinating sinner can not delude the all-seeing God by his selfish attempt to palm off these shrieks of a terrified soul, for the sincere sorrow of a penitent. Such a death-bed cry only amounts to this: "Life is drawing near its end, and I know that I am about to pass into the eternal world. I have taken all the good I could on this side the grave, and now that I can remain here no longer I will turn about and secure the good on the other side also!" Much more easily said than done. "God is not mocked." "Whatsoever" we sow in time, we shall reap in eternity!

There are few persons so hardened in guilt as not

to promise themselves some season of amendment; and, strange as it may appear, a death-bed repentance is that upon which they rely.

I. The grand motive which should influence the sinner in turning to God is love to the kind and gracious Father, who has so long borne with his waywardness, and a sincere desire to promote His glory.

Follow me now to the bed-side of the procrastinating sinner, who has waited until the eleventh hour is almost spent, before he finds time to accept of God's mercy. No love for the Creator dwells in his breast. No gratitude to the Saviour calls forth the emotions of his heart. No zeal for the honor of God could lead him to make any sacrifice in His cause. The sands of life have nearly run out, and "the Judge standeth before the door" (St. James v. 9). Hell, with its torments of remorse, seems ready to receive him, and in this, the last hour of existence, he cries to the Saviour for help. The door of mercy is shut. Slavish, selfish fear is not the motive which must bring us to God. How hopeless then is the condition of those who "have cried unto Him," but not from the depths of the heart, "when they howled upon their beds!"

II. Again, a reliance on a death-bed repentance implies a doubt of the declarations of the Bible, that God expects us to walk before Him during the days of our earthly pilgrimage in holiness and righteousness.

We know, indeed, that He is "abundant in mercy," and that He is willing to afford us all the opportunities to become reconciled unto Him; all the helps to enable us to do our duty; and all the promises of future bliss, which even the most unreasonable of His creatures could ask for.

On the other hand, He commands us, most explicitly, to work while it is day, and reminds us of an hour when the Master of the house having closed the door, all applications for admission, no matter how loud, or importunate, will be in vain.

The pages of inspiration paint in glowing colors, the terror which seizes the guilty soul, when standing on the verge of the eternal world.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, do we find any words of comfort, any promise of deliverance, that people should venture to wait until that hour, to make their peace with God? "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. . . . I will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. i. 24).

II. It is a prominent feature in the great plan of redemption, that we should openly acknowledge our allegiance to God, by becoming a member of His Church; and by a holy life, and heavenly conversation, "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."

If all should look to a death-bed repentance, to fit them for heaven, (and if some people do so, why may not all?) what a prospect the world would present!

The warnings of God's providence repeated in vain; the Redeemer's cross trampled in the dust; no fragrant incense of prayer going up from the altar; no ambassadors of Christ to point us to heaven; but old and young, hastening onward blindfold in the pathway to hell.

The very ground-work of the system of faith would be overturned. The very hope which men thus indulge of turning at last to God, condemns itself. It is necessary in its calculation, that there should be some wise and

prudent ones who are not led astray by its shallow delusion, and who, having accepted of the precious privileges of the Gospel for themselves, are enabled to act as the messengers of God's mercy, and the accepted intercessors for those who have so rashly delayed their return to Him.

How foolish and false, then, is that hope, which only stands upon the annihilation of the very purposes and power upon which it depends! Is there one who is deluding himself with the possibility of a death-bed repentance, who would recommend to a friend, the course which he himself is pursuing?

IV. In these enlightened days, it would be difficult to find one within the limits of civilized life, who had not repeatedly heard of the offers of mercy, through the merits of a crucified Saviour.

The world, however, has presented too many charms; business completely engrossed his thoughts; the care of providing for the mere earthly wants of a family engaged too much of his time to leave any for the concerns of the soul.

Now and then the thought will involuntarily arise, "When shall I prepare for my final account?" and the devil stands ready to suggest, that a few hours of prayer on a death-bed will be preparation enough.

The careless worldling listens most readily to the sly tempter's advice. He has no desire to confess Christ before men; he is afraid of their ridicule and scorn. He has not the slightest inclination to enter upon a life of holiness; its sacrifices and restraints do not fall in with his tastes. He does not wish to yield obedience to the laws of God; he would much rather be convinced that God did not exist. He goes on therefore, disregarding

the Saviour's gracious invitations, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace, trusting that all will turn out well at the last. The very difficulty of the work of repentance is what has kept him from beginning it before.

It is put off, from year to year, because it would encroach too much upon his time. And is this great work, which a whole life is too short adequately to perform; this work of difficulty and self-sacrifice; this work on which hang the destinies of a never-dying soul; to be crowded into one day, one hour, and that, the hour of death?

The condemned sinner will find, at last, that he is numbered among those who "cried not unto God with their heart, when they howled upon their beds."

V. Besides faith and repentance, habitual obedience is required of every one who truly turns to God.

We are expressly commanded to "work out our salvation, with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12).

Is a death-bed the place we should choose to root out sinful passions and desires, subdue habits indulged in for years, and form plans for amendment of life? While we are in health, would repentance unaccompanied by contrition of soul, and not followed by obedience to God, be regarded as genuine? And can the same repentance, which is the offspring of fear, prove more availing in a dying hour?

To suppose so would be absurd. Time is speeding swiftly onward, and the day of grace will soon be ended. If you ever intend to save your souls, you should set about it now. There are many doors through which you may pass out of this world, but there is only one door into heaven!

SERMON XXIV.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

(Fourth Sunday in Lent.)

"In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power."—EXODUS ix., part of 16th verse.

JOSEPHUS tells us that the title of Pharaoh was applied to the kings of Egypt from Moses to Solomon, but not afterwards. The word, in the Egyptian language, signifies a king.

The monarch who bore this title in the time of Joseph was a very different person from his successor, concerning whose stubbornness of heart so much is told us in the chapter from which the text is taken, and in others which precede and follow it.

It should also be stated that the Pharaoh who was drowned in the Red Sea, at the departure of the children of Israel from the house of their bondage, was not the same who directed the murder of the Jewish children, when Moses was an infant, and consigned, for safety, to the ark of bulrushes. These two kings, however, were much alike in character; both being ambitious and cruel, and little disposed to hesitate about using any means which would be likely to serve their selfish purposes. Both were proud and obstinate; two faults which generally go together.

As the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, alluded to in

the text, has furnished infidelity with one of its most plausible objections against the authority of the Bible, it may not be unprofitable to look a little into the subject.

When we meet with a statement, in any book, and on any subject, which flies in the very face of truth and justice, a fair minded reader will be disposed to say, that he has not clearly understood the writer's meaning, and that the peculiar form of expression employed to convey it is susceptible of a different interpretation.

It is simply absurd to say that a good and holy God secretly influences a man's will, or suggests any wicked resolution to his mind, and then punishes him for it.

The truth is that the deceitful heart may be hardened by the very miracles and mercies which were designed to soften it. God is sometimes said to do that which He permits to be done by others.

The heart may be hardened by His withdrawing that grace of the Holy Spirit which it has long resisted; and people may be, and have been, delivered over to a reprobate mind; but all this is judicial, and supposes previous voluntary wickedness, which it is designed to punish.

The plagues of Egypt were calculated to soften the heart of the stubborn king, if any thing could do it, but he resisted unto the end. It is on this account that Moses delivers to him the severe message contained in the text: *"In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power."*

The words do not mean that the Almighty had created Pharaoh for this purpose; but that He had exalted him to worldly distinction, and preserved him alive, when the pestilence was ready to destroy, that he

might serve as a beacon to warn the obstinate and rebellious in after times.

It is a fearful thought, that God may allow us to reach positions of influence and authority, towards which our own selfish ambition has drawn us; and all this not for the purpose of imparting a blessing, but really for the manifesting a judgment, or for the display of His omnipotence.

With these few words of explanation we are prepared to direct our thoughts more exclusively to the haughty monarch to whom its startling language was addressed.

The drama of Pharaoh opens with the early chapters of Exodus. He shows himself from the outset to be a cruel but long-headed man, who is determined on turning the destruction of his enemies to his own account, and while he prepares his plans to crush them with the overwhelming weight of their bondage, he purposes at the same time to wring from their sorrow the proud cities of his treasure.

The steps of this despot in his path of obstinate rebellion were gradual, but sure. The children of Israel were seized, and made to labor upon the public works under the lash of exacting and heartless task-masters. Their Heavenly Father, however, watched over and protected them, and in the damp stone-quarry, in the lime-pit, and in the brick-field, they multiplied as rapidly as under the cool tents of Goshen.

The Almighty chose Moses to be their deliverer and lawgiver; and this meekest of men, having received instructions from the Lord, and accompanied by his brother, who was more fluent of speech, appeared before the king of Egypt.

Pharaoh sat in the open court, where oriental monarchs hearkened to the complaints of their subjects; and solicited the temporary release of the Israelites, that they might go and hold a feast unto the God whom they worshipped.

Pharaoh received this application with contempt, and sneeringly asked, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" (Exodus v. 2.)

The burdens laid upon the oppressed people were doubled, and they thoughtlessly charged this aggravation of their miseries on the two brave men who were striving to set them free.

Again Moses and Aaron appeared before the king, and repeated their application; and when they wrought miracles in attestation of their claim to his attention, he endeavored to support his defiance of the Most High, by calling on the skilful magicians about the court to do away the effect of these evidences of Divine power by their dexterous and bewildering tricks. Aaron's serpent swallowed up all the rest, and the disheartened bondmen felt their hopes of deliverance revive. Pharaoh hardened his heart, and refused to obey.

Now the famous plagues of Egypt began. While the king was standing on the brink of the sacred river Nile (very likely in the performance of some ceremonial observance), the leaders of Israel drew near and renewed their demand for freedom, which was met with the same cool contempt as before.

Aaron, forthwith, struck the river with his rod, and all the waters of Egypt became blood, and the fish, many of which were objects of worship, perished.

The court-magicians imitated this miracle in a small

way, and Pharaoh, more obstinate and sullen than ever, retired to his palace.

The terrible consequences of the miracle lasted seven days; a period long enough to convince the Egyptians that it had actually been wrought. As no good effect seemed likely to be produced on the heart of the king, the mercy of God caused the waters to be restored to their former state. When judgments designed to correct and amend fail to accomplish this end, there is no need of their continuance.

A second plague was now sent.^a The whole land was covered with frogs, and the disgusting creatures swarmed alike in the bed-chambers of nobles, and in the huts of the poor; no place being free from them. Again the skilful magicians practiced their delusive arts, and seemed to produce frogs also; but they had no more power to drive them away, than to cause the bloody waters to become pure.

Pharaoh's heart began to soften, and he entreated that this judgment might be removed; promising that the request of the Hebrews should be granted.

No sooner, however, were the frogs destroyed, at the prayer of Moses, than his pledge was forgotten.

Then came the second successful blow, and Pharaoh consented, if the flies were removed, "to let them go," only not "very far"; showing that he would acknowledge God, and give up his sin, provided he might keep it in sight, and within recall.

The next time, sorrow no longer touched him; and he refused to fulfil his solemn promise. The same may be said in the case of the boils; and the first real expression of repentance was wrung from the stubborn king, by the plague of the hail.

He acknowledged that the Lord was righteous, and that he and his people were wicked; but no sooner was the punishment removed, than he relapsed into his former state.

Next follows a series of compromises. Pharaoh offers to yield some of the points in dispute; but insists that while the men go away to attend to the religious obligations which Moses had spoken of, that the women and children and cattle should be left behind.

He then would see the face of Moses no more. The refusal to hear the word of God again, is the closing point of his career. The last trial comes; the first-born are slain. Pharaoh gives up all; but his repentance is too late. He had tried God's patience once too often!

The several downward steps in this wretched man's career, were simply these. First, unbelief and contempt of God. Next, when his fears were aroused, he recognized the hand of the Almighty in the wonders which had been wrought. Indifference and hardness of heart followed close upon this brief season of conviction. Then came the unworthy attempt to make a compromise with duty; and then the final step, which was the natural conclusion to the whole; shutting his ears to every warning, and speedy and terrible destruction.

Here is a faithful picture of the progress of many a man on the road to ruin. When our holy religion makes its powerful appeals to the rebellious heart, through the voice of a living ministry, the whisperings of conscience, or the teachings of the Bible, the response, like that of Pharaoh, too often is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?"

The magicians, the powers of intellect, the discover-

ies of science, and the pleasures of sin, captivate the soul, and the proud mortal who was already disposed to question the very existence of God sinks down into a state of reckless indifference.

Trials are mercifully sent, to rouse him from his dangerous condition, but, like the proud king of Egypt, he hardens his heart, and the promises of amendment which are forced from him, are only made to be broken.

Pharaoh was startled from his slumber by the wail of the first-born, whom the destroying angel had smitten; he consents that the Israelites shall depart; but they have no sooner taken him at his word, than he pursues them with chariots and horsemen, resolved on bringing them back. When the waters of the Red Sea overwhelmed the proud host in a moment, God gave the world a lesson which it would be wise never to forget.

There may come a time in the career of all wrongdoers, when they fancy that they are willing to abandon every thing in the way of opposition and defiance against God, but they can not.

There will be a moment, when, having pursued the dreamy beings of their lusts, through life, they will assume at death the ghastly forms of nightmares; and when, affrighted by the terrible visions, the cowardly attempt is made, to appease the wrath of offended goodness by the agonizing cry of despair, the door of mercy will be shut!

Some years ago several young men were skating on a pond near Princeton, New Jersey, when they discovered that they were close to an "air-hole," and that the ice was beginning to break.

Most of them prudently stopped, but one, more ven-

turesome than the rest, shouted, "I am not afraid! give us one round more!" It sounded very brave in him to say so, but he never repeated his rash words. The ice gave way, and the next day his lifeless remains were dragged out for the burial.

Thus foolhardy men go on in sin. They expect to stop soon. They only ask for "one round more!"

SERMON XXV.

A YOUNG MAN VOID OF UNDERSTANDING.

(Fifth Sunday in Lent.)

"A young man void of understanding."—PROVERBS vii., part of 7th verse.

THIS is a polite way of calling him a fool. Any one who does thoughtless, imprudent, suicidal things deserves the name. Fools are by no means hard to find. We are often so ignorant of ourselves that it is a real kindness when one takes the pains to enlighten us.

I shall sketch the portrait of "A young man void of understanding," that others may study it, and if need be, find profit in so doing.

No one will deny that we are placed in the world for some good purpose; to be something, and to do something. Having endowed us with physical, intellectual, and moral powers, God may reasonably expect us to make a proper use of them.

To be "void of understanding" is to act the part of a madman; doing violence to reason, despising wisdom, and manifesting a foolhardy recklessness as to the results of our conduct.

The young man who answers to this description is,

I. One who makes light of parental restraints and counsels.

The only commandment in the Decalogue to which

any specific temporal blessing is attached, is that which teaches us to honor and obey our father and mother. Length of days in the land was the promise made to Israel, and it is a promise which has never been withdrawn. The fiercest invader can not overrun the land where home is a sacred possession, and where filial reverence renders the very graves of the fathers a sacred spot.

The world is now reading with wonder and delight the life of one whose writings are ranked among the prodigies of literature, and which have not only shined as lights through the whole universe of letters, but have gained a sure place in the solid firmament of fame. Brilliant as Lord Macaulay was as a writer, and high as was his position in the ranks of orators and statesmen, he is chiefly to be admired as a good and devoted son.

No young man is walking in safe paths who is engaged in pursuits or pleasures, which a wise father or a tender mother would be mortified and grieved to see him mixed up with.

II. "A young man void of understanding" neglects the cultivation of his mind.

If "knowledge is power," ignorance is weakness. It is the mind of man which lifts him above the level of the brutes, and allies him to angels. He who has no mental resources is more to be pitied than the one who lacks food for the body.

A stranger passing through an English Park read this announcement on a sign board, nailed to a tree: "All dogs found in this park will be shot." A friend, who was with him, said, "Unless dogs can read, they are pretty badly off here!"

In the present state of society, a man without knowledge, is worse off than a dog in the park.

When complaint was made to the Duchess of Modena, that her son had too many branches to study at one time, and that his strength was overtaxed, she calmly answered, "It were better for me to have no son, than to have an ignorant one."

The mind must be carefully trained, in order that the soul may fulfil her destiny upon earth, and be prepared for a more glorious existence hereafter.

Even those whose early advantages of education have been the scantiest and the most discouraging, have raised themselves, by strength of will and dogged perseverance, to the highest grade of scholarship.

He who is industrious has really the most leisure; and no human power can crush the ambitious spirit which is determined to climb up to the top of the ladder. The night before the famous battle of Pharsalia, which was to decide the destinies of so many millions, Brutus sat reading in his tent; while the amiable Petrarch never passed a happy day, in which he did not read, or write, or do both.

He who learns something every day, be it ever so little, will, in the end, become a wise man.

III. Again, "A young man void of understanding," is content to live an idle and aimless life.

When a gallant ship has been completely rigged and launched, the proper place for her is not the dock-yard where she was built, to lie there until destroyed by slow decay, but in the pathway of commerce, on the foaming deep. And so, for a young man endowed with high and noble faculties, and designed by his Creator to live a life

of activity and usefulness, to spend the golden hours of existence in irresolution and idleness with no definite purpose, betrays, as much as any thing else could do, the lack of good sense.

The Almighty One could easily have arranged the various processes of germination, and the ripening of grains and fruits, so that there would have been no need for man to plow or plant. Employment, however, is essential to his happiness and purity, and it is a well-established fact that the nations which have the least to call forth the energies of body and mind, occupy the lowest place in the scale of intelligence and virtue.

Pliny tells us that Cressinus gathered so much more wealth from a small piece of ground than his neighbors could from a much larger one, that they accused him of witchcraft.

In order to defend himself, he brought his servants into court, with their instruments of labor, and said, "My witchcraft, O ye Romans! are these. These servants, and these tools, are all the witchcraft that I know of. I say not to my servants, 'Go do this, or do that,' but, 'Come, let us go do it!' and so the work goes on."

IV. Another evidence that a young man is "void of understanding" is that he chooses his bosom companions from the ranks of the thoughtless and the profane.

Two parrots once lived near each other, the one having been taught to sing hymns, while the other had become a proficient in swearing. The owner of the profane bird was so anxious to have him acquire the more becoming habits of his neighbor, that he borrowed the hymn-singing parrot; but the unfortunate result followed, that both became profane swearers.

Circe dwelt in her fabled palace, embowered in trees, with music and flowers, to charm her unsuspecting guests. She first feasted them with delicacies, and excited them with deep potations from the intoxicating cup, and then, by a touch of her magic wand, transformed them into tigers, or wolves, or swine.

It would be no better evidence of madness, to open our doors to those who bring the plague to infect our bodies, than to associate with swearers and blasphemers who destroy both body and soul. We are, naturally, social beings, and seek for pleasure in the company of others. If our intimate friends are intelligent, honorable, and virtuous, we can reasonably look for good from our frequent association with them.

The "young man void of understanding," delights in the foolish talking and coarse jokes of the trifler, and the debasing and corrupting influences of such companions soon tell upon his own character and conduct.

"He that walketh with wise men," says Solomon, "shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. xiii. 20).

V. A fifth mark by which a "young man void of understanding" may be recognized, is when he yields to the enticements of folly and wickedness.

As soon as he reaches the point when he is indifferent to the opinion of the wise and the good, and if expostulated with on the impropriety and iniquity of his course, answers, with unblushing effrontery, "I don't care!" his case may well be set down as desperate.

The young are always surrounded by temptations, and every evil thought which is allowed a resting-place in the mind, vitiates and corrodes the fibres of the soul, and every

sinful deed, unnerves the arm and paralyzes the essential power of manhood.

"I had a friend—a rare friend," said a minister who often speaks words of warning to young men, "who, to fine personal appearance, added a generosity, frankness, and ardor of nature that made me love him like a brother. I saw evil people gathering around him. They came up from saloons and from gambling-hells, and they plied him with a thousand arts. They seized upon his social nature, and he could not stand the charm. In his moments of repentance he would go home, and take his little girl of eight years, and embrace her convulsively, and strew around her every thing that could make her happy, and, then, as though hardened by an evil spirit, he would go out to the inflaming cup, and the house of shame. I was summoned to his death-bed. He grasped my hand excitedly, and said, 'Last night I saw my mother, who has been dead twenty years. It was no dream—I was wide awake—'

"Then turning to his distracted wife, 'I wish you would take these strings off of me. There are strings spun all around my body.' Thus he raved on in his delirium, and so he died" (Talmage).

And so thousands die,—all unprepared to go.

VI. Once more, "A young man void of understanding" makes light of religion.

Religion never encouraged anybody to be indolent and improvident; never led him into the haunts of vice; never wasted his substance in riotous living; never dragged a single victim to the prison or the gallows; but all its offices in the world have been elevating and beneficent.

Hume, the historian, after observing in the family of

the saintly La Roche those consolations which the gospel of the Son of God alone can give, confessed, with a heavy sigh, that "there were moments when, amidst all the pleasures of philosophical discovery and the pride of literary fame, he wished that he had never doubted."

Unbelief is not a misfortune, but it is the sin, the damning sin of the world. No one who faithfully studies God's word and becomes acquainted with Him ever doubts and denies the saving truths of the Bible (Romans x. 17).

Men first do wrong, and then believe wrong in order to escape from its consequences. True religion will make you abhor sin and draw you to Christ, the Redeemer. It will strengthen you for duty, and nerve you for endurance; aye, it will give you songs in the night, and even through the grave and gate of death it will brighten your pathway to eternal glory.

The portrait which I have sketched of "A young man void of understanding" is not an attractive one; but any trifling good which I may have accomplished by holding it up for your inspection is in danger of being lost through an agency which you do not dream of. The devil has been watching you very closely, and while he would not be so short-sighted as to shock any one here by saying outright, "The preacher has merely been talking nonsense," yet he is trying his old, successful game. Instead of opposing religion, he simply hints to you that any sober reflection which the sermon may have aroused had better be suffered to pass away for awhile, and that you can readily recall it when you please.

The devil has practiced the same trick upon you before, and if you persist in being made the dupe of the father of lies, he will exult over the horrors and un-

availing remorse of your dying bed, and the eternal lamentations of a lost soul.

Our great statesmen and philosopher, Dr. Franklin, was as strong-minded and matter-of-fact as any one who hears me now; and yet during his last sickness he directed that a large picture of the Saviour on the cross might be hung on the wall in his bed-chamber, that his dying eyes might rest on the world's Redeemer. The time will soon come to each of us, when we shall be glad to look to Him also!

SERMON XXVI.

THE HOLY CITY.

(Sunday next before Easter.)

“God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.”—HEBREWS xi., part of 16th verse.

IN the imposing procession which heralded the Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem on the morning of Palm Sunday, there was something which reminds us of another occasion yet to come, when “a great multitude,” bearing “palms in their hands,” shall stand before His throne, at the final judgment.

It will be “a great multitude, which no man can number;” so abundant is the mercy of our Heavenly Father towards all who seek His pardoning grace.

The “multitude” will consist “of all nations,” for the vesture of the bride of Christ is “wrought about with divers colors”; “of kindred,” because all are one in Him; “of peoples,” as the voice of many waters; and of all “tongues,” as moulded into harmony in the one language of the blessed Spirit of love; clad in “white robes,” as priests forever, resplendent with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness; and “with palms in their hands,” as more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

Henceforth, they are to be inhabitants of the “holy

city," the New Jerusalem, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10).

"O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country,
That eager hearts expect!"

While Dr. Payson lay on his dying bed, although racked by inconceivable bodily suffering, he exclaimed, in holy triumph, "The victory is won forever! I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness, to all eternity!"

Classical nations pictured their traditional Paradise, the Garden of Hesperides, as an island, somewhere in the ocean.

"In some hour of solemn jubilee,
The massy gates of Paradise are thrown
Wide open, and forth come, in fragments wild,
Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,
And odors snatched from beds of amaranth,
And they that from the crystal river of life
Sprung up on freshened wing, ambrosial gales!
The favored good man in his lonely walk
Perceives them, and his silent spirit drinks
Strange bliss, which he shall recognize in heaven."

(COLERIDGE.)

A wonderful fact is made known to us in the text, that poor and undeserving though we be, the great and good *God is not ashamed to be called our God*. As the most substantial evidence He could possibly give, that He cherishes the tenderest love for his faithful people, "*He hath prepared for them a city.*"

For costly materials, excellent workmanship, vast extent, perfect purity, and for the health and happiness of its inhabitants, no such city was ever known before.

When we ask where heaven is? various answers are returned.

Plato points to the snowy top of Mount Olympus, and says, "It is there!" Swedenborg, with his misty dreamings, beholds spiritual presences in all space, and insists that heaven is everywhere. Wordsworth, in poetic fancy, lives again through the sunshiny days of youth, and assures us, "Heaven lies above us in our infancy."

Our blessed Lord gives definite shape to the fond anticipations of His followers, when He declares, "I go to prepare a place for you" (St. John xiv. 2); and this "place" is heaven.

"Death leads the just through the intermediate Paradise, through the joyful reunion of the resurrection, and through the blessed award of the last day, to all which we are taught to name most fully heaven and the life eternal. The divine oracles exhaust the imagery of earthly joys and splendors and glories, to afford inspiring glimpses of it. There shine the gates, the walls, the domes, the pinnacles of a celestial city; its battlements are jasper, its pavements are gold, its foundations are jewels, its portals are pearls. Within flows the pure river of the water of life, and by it grows the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The ransomed are there, with songs, with harps, with crowns, with palms, with spotless, resplendent robes; they shine as the stars and as the brightness of the firmament; . . . they rest in the peace of an everlasting Sabbath" (Bishop Burgess).

What sweet thoughts of heaven are suggested by the Saviour's mention of it, as "My Father's House" (St. John xiv. 1, 2).

"I leave the world," He says in another place, "and go unto the Father" (St. John xvi. 28).

When we have learned to view death, and the better world beyond, as the Bible represents them, our doubts and fears will cease to disturb us. What would become of our strange reluctance to leave this vale of tears, and find refuge in the realms of endless day? If we spoke of those who had departed this life in the true faith of God's holy name, it would be in words like those of Judah concerning Benjamin, "The youngest is this day with our Father!" The stereotyped formula of "losing" relatives and friends, would give place to the cheerful language of those who are looking forward to the hour of recognition, and reunion forever.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. v. 1).

Here many of the Lord's most devoted children are poorly provided for, but in heaven their abode will be infinitely more sumptuous than the grandest royal palaces of the earth. "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings" (Is. xxxii. 18). "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians iv. 17).

Professor Morse, the inventor of the "Magnetic Telegraph," had been a devout servant of Christ all his days, and even when the honors of the world were showered upon him, he was still the same humble Christian, look-

ing forward to the glories of the heavenly state. At the advanced age of eighty, meeting with a severe accident which confined him for some time to the house, his pastor gives this note of a visit which he made him: "He was strapped upon his bed, but, patient and gentle in suffering, there came upon him such a transfiguration of Divine love that I almost thought to see him then, with trailing garments of glory, sweep through the gates of pearl into the city of the great King." Such honor, and such glorious hopes, have all His saints.

"The New Jerusalem," which will be their final home, is no earthly city, nor the old Jerusalem rebuilt. It is a new and more glorious city, having the glory of God and of the Lamb, and embracing every thing that is excellent, beautiful, perfect, and enduring. St. John, who gazed on it in vision, describes it as "That great city" (xxi. 10). Its circuit is vast beyond Babylon or Nineveh or any of the mightiest cities of the earth. The foundations of its jasper walls are eternal. It is "compactly built together," lying four-square (Ps. cxxii. 3; Rev. xxi 16), being perfect in all its parts, without weakness or deformity. "Most cities have been determined in their outline by the character of the ground, by hills, streams, or ravines; or have grown up by accretions, where one part has been joined to another, so that there is no regularity, and so that the original plan, if there was any, has been lost sight of. The New Jerusalem, on the contrary, had been built according to a plan of the utmost regularity" (Barnes).

The city is represented as "four-square," as in Ezekiel (xlvi. 16), equal not only in length and breadth, but in height also, and, therefore, "a solid cubic form,

denoting firmness; such a shape as is incapable of being overthrown" (Isaac Williams).

It is a well-guarded city. Not only has it walls and gates and towers such as no enemy could scale or break through, but at the gates twelve angels keep perpetual watch.

"Blessed city! city of peace and love and song! . . . The right of citizenship is to be had now: and they who are to dwell in it are not angels, but men; not the un-fallen, but the fallen. It is as such that we apply for the 'freedom of the city.' He who is its builder and maker gives it freely. He who is its Prince, whose blood has bought and opened it, gives it freely. He waits to receive applications; nay, He entreats men to apply" (Bonar).

In a wild region of Canada East called Saguenay, stretching along the northern shore of the St. Lawrence, are lofty and rugged mountains, whose precipitous sides no mortal foot has trod. At the base of one of these a rock which rises majestically from the surface of the water to the height of fifteen hundred feet is known as "Eternity Point." The name, and the grandeur of nature on every side, suggest solemn reflections even to the most unconcerned.

"Eternity Point!" The end of the voyage of life is near, and that point must soon be reached.

Will the course we are following now bring us to the haven where we would be? "Work out your own salvation" (Phil. ii. 12). "Let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. iv. 1).

Although the golden city is so vast in extent, and

able to accommodate countless myriads, many for whom Christ died, will not gain admittance to its gates.

If people hearken to the persuasive voice of Satan instead of obeying God, they must dwell with the master throughout eternity, whose service they made choice of upon earth. The prince of the power of the air and his myrmidons have no wish to occupy their gloomy realms alone.

"If we are sitting drowsy by our camp-fires, the enemy is on the alert. You can hear the tramp of their legions and the rumble of their artillery through the night, as they march to their posts on the field. It is no time for God's sentinels to nod. If they sleep, the adversary does not, but glides in the congenial darkness, sowing his baleful tares" (Maclaren).

We know full well the purpose of this unwearied activity. It is to rob us of our heavenly inheritance. Each one must answer for it to his own soul, whether or not this diabolical purpose be accomplished!

SERMON XXVII.

THE LIGHT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.

(Monday in Holy Week.)

"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." REVELATION xxi. 23.

"GLORIOUS things," said the inspired psalmist, "are spoken of thee, thou city of God" (lxxxvii. 3).

True as this was of Jerusalem as King David saw it while he lived on earth, the language will be far more applicable to the New Jerusalem above. The announcement of the text at once recalls the glowing passage in Isaiah from which the imagery is undoubtedly borrowed. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (lx. 19, 20).

During an invasion of Greece, when every one was hastily gathering up his goods to carry them off to a place of security, Bias, one of the wise men, alone remained calm and unconcerned. When asked why he took no pains to save any thing, his answer was, "I carry all my treasure with me!"

May our hearts be so weaned from temporal things by our contemplation of the heavenly, that when the earth and all things therein shall be burned up, we may feel assured of an abundant entrance into the holy city.

A blind Hindoo boy, who lived in a wretched hole dug for him in the ground, was drawing near his end, but his mind had been enlightened by the Spirit of God, and he feared no evil. "Let me die," he said; "I do not like to stay in this dark place; I will go where there is light." The grand passage from Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," gave him much satisfaction, and he emphasized the words, "In my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." In his last moments, catching glimpses of the glories of the New Jerusalem, the blind boy cried out in transport, "I see! Now I have light! I see Jesus in His beauty! Tell the missionary that the blind boy sees!"

The point brought before us in the text is the light of the New Jerusalem.

The imagery employed by St. John gives the idea of a resplendent lamp hung in a vast hall, or magnificent palace, shedding a flood of light upon the happy assembly which crowd its vast area; or rather, a marvellous lamp suspended above a mighty city, as was the pillar-cloud above the camp of Israel.

This lamp is the Lamb, and all excellency, power, perfection, beauty and glory come forth from Him.

There will no longer be need of sun nor moon. "The glory of the Lord will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof."

Melville, in his own peculiar gorgeousness of language,

observes in regard to this inconceivable change in our powers and privileges, "I am wonderfully struck by this abstraction of the material sun from our firmament, and this making God Himself the immediate source of our light, though I can hardly give consistency or shape to the struggling thoughts which the imagery excites. . . .

. . . . Think of the sudden quenching of that luminary which now daily 'cometh forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race;' but this extinction of the sun not followed but by irradiations such as have never yet fallen on this earth. It is a glorious thing now, when the golden beams of day flood the canopy of heaven; and forest, and mountain, and river, are beautiful with light. Glorious is it; yea, and very demonstrative of Deity, when the whole creation wakes up at the summons of the morning, as though the trumpet had sounded, and the vast grave of night were giving back the cities and the solitudes which had gone down into its recesses. But now we are to have no sun: the hand of the Almighty hath quenched it; and nevertheless we are not encompassed with the shadows of the evening, but, on the contrary, dazzled with a radiance immeasurably surpassing that of the noontide. In place of a firmament lit up by the shinings of a material body, we have the infinite vault converted into one brilliant manifestation of Godhead; the splendid coruscations of righteousness and truth and justice and loving-kindness weaving themselves together to form the arch; and the burning brightness of Him who can not 'look on iniquity,' glancing to and fro like the lightning, though not to scathe, but only to illuminate."

"The city needs not sun nor moon," since not by the light and elements of the world is the Church governed, but by the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness; even by the brightness of His glory who proclaimed Himself to be "the light of the world."

"The light itself," remarks the venerable Bede, "by which we are now guided as we walk by the way, is that which we shall enjoy in our country. Informed by the same, we now discern between good and evil; but then, made blessed by it, we shall see nothing but good."

Cities, in various ages of the world, have been lighted by different contrivances, each marked by ingenuity and skill.

The light of the New Jerusalem will be unlike all else. "It is Divine, but it is also human. All created and all uncreated brilliance is concentrated in it. The man Christ Jesus is there. God over all is there. The Word made flesh, and that flesh truly ours; that flesh broken and given for the life of the world,—this is the essence of the light. Christ Jesus filled with the Spirit, the Lamb to whom pertain the seven lamps of fire; Christ Jesus, the Lamb slain; it is He as such that is the lamp of the holy city, possessing and giving forth all the light the city needs, yet that light softened and mellowed by His cross and grave. It is not so much as God or as the Christ, that He is the lamp of the city but as the Lamb" (Bonar).

Unlike the partial and imperfect light which sheds itself upon other cities, the light of the New Jerusalem will be all-pervading. The whole city will be resplendent as noonday.

It will also be a life-giving light, diffusing blessing

as it shines, even health and immortality. Moreover, this light of the heavenly city will be the light of redeeming love.

"It pours its radiance through transparencies, which all speak of the cross and the blood, of Gethsemane and Golgotha, flooding the golden streets with an effulgence that shall speak throughout eternity of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord. From the lamp of the New Jerusalem there shall shine forth the eternal gospel, in blessed harmony with the eternal song, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever' (Bonar).

There will be no darkness, nor error, nor sin, in those realms of eternal day.

The Christian is not only destined to live forever, but he is capable of an eternal advance in knowledge. He will be permitted to know all that is now hidden from him; all that is to be known of the character and attributes of the Most High, and of the plan of redemption.

There he will enjoy all that is to be enjoyed in a world without a cloud or a tear; all that is beatific in the friendship of the Almighty Father, of the ascended and glorified Redeemer, and of the Blessed Spirit; all that is comforting and inspiring in the goodly fellowship of angels, apostles, prophets, and martyrs; all that is rapturous in reunion with those whom we loved upon earth.

One day as Dr. Newton was walking up Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, with his friend Mr. Lex, they passed Dr. Rush's house, when Mr. Lex pointed to it and said, "That house which Dr. Rush built was one of the largest

and finest in the city. When it was finished he had it furnished with great care. He invited many of his friends to come and see his splendid house, and, one day, when he was coming out, he met an elderly woman whom he knew very well, as she sometimes worked for his family. She was a poor widow, who lived very plainly herself in two small rooms; a good, earnest Christian, whose religion made her happy. As Dr. Rush saw her pass his splendid dwelling, he thought he would like to show her all through it, and see what effect so much magnificence would have upon her. Accordingly, he invited her, and she went in with him. The poor woman looked at every thing very quietly, but did not seem to be as much impressed by what she saw, as the doctor supposed she would be. When they got through, he said to her, 'Well, Mary, what do you think of the house?' 'It's very fine, sir, indeed; and I'm ever so much obliged to you for letting me see it; but it doesn't begin to compare with the house that I'm going to move in before long.' Dr. Rush opened his eyes in wonder, as she added, with great simplicity, 'Let me read you a little about this house.' So saying, she took a small Testament from her pocket, and turning to the last chapters of the Book of Revelation, she read some of those beautiful verses which describe the heavenly city, that is to be the home of those who love Jesus, and ended by saying, 'I hope, sir, you may have much enjoyment in your new house, yet you can't expect to live here very long. Jesus says of those who enter the house which He is preparing for them, that "they shall go no more out." I shall dwell in that heavenly home forever!'"

We may all say the same of ourselves, if we are now trying to "walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah ii. 5).

It will have accomplished very little for you, if your imagination has been kindled and your spirit soothed, by the glorious revelation in the text, of the New Jerusalem, needing neither sun nor moon to lighten it, because God and the Lamb will be the light thereof.

Jesus, the Divine Redeemer, is the light of life,—the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; and to walk in the light of His countenance is the requisite preparation for enjoying the light of the golden city.

Hence St. Paul's exhortation to Christians, "Walk as children of light" (Ephes. v. 8), an exhortation which the Church is always careful to repeat in the baptismal office.

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er:
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever have been before.

"Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be;
Nearer the great white throne;
Nearer the crystal sea.

"Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down;
Nearer leaving the cross;
Nearer gaining the crown."

(PRÆBEE CAREY.)

SERMON XXVIII.

THE RIVER OF LIFE.

(Tuesday in Holy Week.)

“He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”—REVELATION xxii. 1.

THE beautiful imagery of the text is strictly in accordance with the peculiarities of Bible lands, where fountains and running streams constituted an important feature in an ordinary picture of enjoyment and prosperity. St. John no doubt has in mind the first Eden, where a river watered the garden (Genesis xi. 10).

As he was now describing Paradise regained, it was natural that a river should form a part of the picture. Instead of springing up from the ground, it flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, and the river is here to be understood as an emblem of peace and happiness. Surely, the inhabitants of the holy city shall thirst no more. “In Ezekiel’s description there was the vision of waters from ‘under the threshold of the house,’ and in Zechariah the waters from the mystical Jerusalem (xiv. 8); but those were of prior and less plenary fulfilment; this is ‘clear as crystal,’ as implying perfect purity of heart, and it is ‘out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’ In Zechariah they are called ‘living waters’ and in Ezekiel it is said that ‘every thing shall live whither the river cometh’; but this is the very foun-

tain of life of which it is said: 'For with Thee is the well of life.' 'Who only hath immortality.' 'Having life in Himself.' 'The rivers of bliss at His right hand for evermore'" (Isaac Williams).

Pleasure, in some shape or other, is the great and absorbing object of man's pursuit; but, in its best and truest sense, many fail to find it.

A powerful monarch, full of care, and very wretched, once heard of a man famous for his wisdom and devotion, and went in pursuit of him. Finding him in a cave on the border of the wilderness, the king said to him, "Holy man, I come to learn how I may be happy."

Without returning any answer, the hermit led him over a rough path, until they came in front of a high rock, on the top of which an eagle had built her nest. "Why has the eagle built her nest there?"

"Doubtless," answered the king, "that it may be out of danger."

"Then imitate the bird," said the holy man; "build thy home in heaven, and then shalt thou have happiness and peace."

God's everlasting love secures to His people constant and ample comfort; and even in this world, they have a foretaste of the blessedness yet to come. He not only brings them to the river, but He makes them drink of it (Ps. xxxvi. 8).

"That My joy might remain in you," is our Lord's assuring promise, "and that your joy might be full" (St. John xv. 11).

Rivers not only add greatly to the beauty of the landscape, but they serve most important purposes of fertilizing and refreshment.

The river of life, also, according to the sublime description of the inspired painter, in the Apocalypse, is the reality of those things of which the earthly river is the merest shadow.

Before St. John proceeds to minute details, he follows the stream back to its original source. It comes forth "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." The river of life is not only fed from heavenly sources, filled with heavenly water, and is resplendent with heavenly beauty, but it is God's own river, bearing on its bosom the rich abundance of His blessedness.

One great element in the joy of the redeemed in heaven will be, that all their happiness is derived from the undeserved love of God. Aye, He Himself, will be their "exceeding joy."

"Jerusalem of old had no river. No Tigris or Euphrates or Tiber washed her walls, or flowed through the surrounding valleys. The Jordan was at a distance, and the Kedron was a winter torrent, which left a dry channel all summer long. She had, however, a nobler equivalent and compensation; 'The glorious Lord will be to her in the place of broad rivers and streams' (Isa. xxxiii. 21). This, in a loftier sense, will be true of the heavenly Jerusalem; 'God is in the midst of her' (Ps. xlv. 5). The song of earth will be the song of eternity, 'all my springs are in Thee;' 'With Thee is the fountain of life'" (Macduff).

The river of life is a river of power, since it comes forth from a throne, even the throne of God. The river possesses the properties of the throne, and imparts power to those who drink of it.

The resurrection body, which the soul will then in-

habit, will be incorruptible and immortal, and exempt from change and decay.

It will be a beautiful and glorious body, fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Divine Redeemer. They who drink of the river of life, will live forever with the Lord.

The river of life will not only be a river of power, but a river of grace.

St. John tells us that it "proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

The Lamb is the name by which our blessed Lord is generally spoken of in the Book of Revelation, and the reason for it is obvious. It was only because He was willing to become "the Lamb of God," and to offer Himself up as a pure and spotless sacrifice for a guilty world, that the eternal ascription will be sung by myriads who repose on the banks of the river of life, and drink of its refreshing waters, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood!"

The river which makes glad the city of God, once laved the foot of the cross. "He showed me a pure river of water of life," says St. John, in the text. A pure river.

"Like the Lamb from whose throne it comes, who is without blemish and without spot! A pure river! Like the city through which it flows, into which nothing that defileth shall enter! As it pours its heavenly waters on us now, it purifies, it cleanses; and hereafter it will preserve in us eternally that purity which it began in time" (Bonar).

Well may we respect the apostle's words, reminding us of what God is expecting us to aim after, "Every one

that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (I John iii. 3).

"I long for untainted purity!" said a departing pilgrim; "I long for untainted purity!"

Weak and imperfect as we are in this world, there is a world where all the redeemed will be perfectly holy.

Aristotle argued that governments ought to prevent people from gathering together in large towns, because a great city is the source of great evil. In modern times, more than one sovereign has tried to act upon this idea, but with little success.

There is one city, the Heavenly Jerusalem, over which the Son of God will never have cause to weep.

The guarantee to the perfect purity of that city is this, that its King is holy, infinitely and immutably holy.

"There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. xxi. 27).

The river which waters the Heavenly Jerusalem is a "river of life."

The Divine Redeemer, from whose throne it comes, declares of Himself, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (St. John x. 28).

When He had overcome "the sharpness of death, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

The "river of life" is as "clear as crystal." The idea suggested is that of perfect peace in the knowledge of God, undisturbed by the mysteries of the Divine dealings with us.

We watch the river of earth, in its onward flow, and it is oftentimes muddy and perplexing. In God's own

light, in the golden city, we shall see light. The river of life, "clear as crystal," is radiant with heavenly splendor, and communicates its radiance to those who dwell upon its banks.

"Surely, yon heaven, where angels see God's face,
Is not so distant as we deem,
From this low earth! 'Tis but a little space,
The narrow crossing of a slender stream;
'Tis but a veil, which winds might blow aside;
Yet, these are all that us of earth divide
From the bright dwelling of the glorified,
The land of which I dream.

"And these keen stars, the bridal gems of night,
Are purer, lovelier than they seem;
Filled from the inner fountain of deep light,
They pour down heaven's own beam;
Clear speaking from their throne of glorious blue,
Of accents ever ancient, ever new,
In the glad home above, beyond our view,
The land of which I dream."

Besides the several particulars of the text, already mentioned, there is a general view to be taken of it, too important to be passed over. The verse describes a scene from heaven, and is a picture of the presiding powers and principles of it; in short, a group of symbols expressing in the language of time, the realities of eternity.

"These personages that occupy the one undivided throne of heaven, and before whom in equal adoration the heavenly worshippers fall prostrate; this bright effluence that proceeds from them both as from a fountain deep and central, and which pervading the city of God, feeds and quickens the tree of life; do these bring to you no thoughts that harmonize with that great mys-

tery in which the Church of the living God calls upon her children 'by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the unity'?" Surely it is no other than this mystery of the threefold Deity that is shadowed to us in that throne of the Father and the Incarnate Son, from whose depths is gushing the spiritual river of life, that same river of living water of which the evangelist has told us that Christ 'spake it of the spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.' Surely it is nothing less than this that the revealing angel would exhibit to us, as filling and glorifying the City of Peace, the New Jerusalem of God; even as the belief of it is now the glory and adorning of His militant Church below" (Archer Butler).

Such is that river of life which gladdens the holy city, and fills every inhabitant of those blissful mansions with unspeakable delight.

"Let those refuse to sing
That never knew our God;
But children of the Heavenly King
May speak their joys abroad.

"There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

Well can we afford to put up with discomforts and sacrifices by the way, when we remember what awaits us at the end.

Robert Hall, who had been a sufferer from acute disease for many weary years of his pilgrimage, was ac-

customed to say that his chief conception of heaven was rest.

“Mine,” said his friend, William Wilberforce, “mine is love: love to God, and love to every bright and happy inhabitant of that glorious place!”

May we all, by patient continuance in well-doing, come, at last, to those unspeakable joys which God has prepared for those who unfeignedly love Him!

SERMON XXIX.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

(Wednesday in Holy Week.)

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.”—REVELATION xxii., part of 2d verse.

BICKERSTETH, in his popular poem, “Yesterday, To-day, and Forever,” has expressed in few words what the beloved disciple has told us in his marvellous vision of the Apocalypse concerning this tree of life.

“ At last

It seem'd as rising from the sapphire throne
Messiah led us forth at large to view
The city Himself had builded and prepared
After His Father's counsel for His Bride;
A city, or a temple, or a home,
Or rather all in one. Enriched it was
With every exquisite design of love
And every form of beauty. Not a film
Stain'd its bright pavement of transparent gold;
Not a harsh murmur vex'd its silences,
Or with the melodies of angels jarr'd.
No cloud darken'd its empyrean. Joy
Held court here in its own metropolis.
And through the midst the crystal river flow'd
Exhaustless from the everlasting throne,
Shaded on either side by trees of life
Which yielded in unwearying interchange
Their ripe vicissitude of monthly fruits
Amid their clustering leaves medicinal.”

The peculiar phraseology of the text has led to no little perplexity, and diversity of interpretation. "*In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.*"

Professor Stuart renders this, "between the street thereof and the river," and remarks that "the writer conceives of the river as running through the whole city; then of streets parallel to it on either side; and then on the banks of the river, between the water and the street, the whole street is lined on either side with two rows of the tree of life."

The common interpretation, which represents the tree as planted in the streets of the city, as well as on the banks of the river, gives a very beautiful image, and conveys the idea that it abounded everywhere.

In short, "it was the common tree in this blessed Paradise, of which all might partake, and which was everywhere the emblem of immortality. In this respect this new Paradise stands in strong contrast with that in which Adam was placed at his creation, where there seems to have been a single tree that was designated as the tree of life (Gen. iii. 22, 23). In the future state of the blessed that tree will abound; . . . the emblem, the pledge of immortal life, will be constantly before the eyes, whatever part of the future abode may be traversed, and the inhabitants of that blessed world may constantly partake of it" (Barnes).

The Heavenly Paradise, unlike the first Eden, will combine both city and garden, and perfection and glory will encompass all.

The tree of life which was planted in the garden of Eden produced material fruit, adapted for the nourish-

ment of the body. It is plain, however, that it was not to be eaten for this alone, but that it was set apart, to be partaken of at certain times, as a symbol, or sacrament, of that divine principle which nourishes the soul for immortality.

The tree of life was "an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace," given to our first parents "as a means whereby they were to receive the same, and a pledge to assure them thereof."

Thus they were perpetually reminded that there was another and better life, which they were in this way prepared to enjoy; a life to which they were to look forward as the end and the reward of obedience.

Had Adam and Eve passed safely through their season of probation, they would, no doubt, have been removed in due season, to the Heavenly Paradise, without suffering the penalty of death.

When, however, God's holy law was wilfully broken, He graciously entered into a new covenant with His disobedient children. They must now suffer in the flesh for sin, and pass through the dark valley of death.

Through the merits of a Mediator, the gate of death was to lead them back to their forfeited immortality: even the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom is life, and the life is the light of men" (St. John i. 4).

"What the tree of life was to Adam in Paradise; what sacrifice in general was to the faithful after the fall; what the Paschal Lamb was to Israel quitting Egypt; what manna was to that people in the wilderness; all this is now briefly comprehended, during the continuance of the Christian Church upon earth, in the holy Eucharist. The former were prefigurative sacra-

ments, this is a commemorative one. . . Excluded from the tree of life in Paradise, we are admitted to partake of the bread of life in the Church. Lost by the covenant of works, we are saved by that of grace. A cheering voice calls to us from the sanctuary, 'Draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort'" (Bishop Horne).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God. Yea, verily, He is the source of all blessing, both in heaven and earth. He is the bright and refreshing river. He is the life-giving fruit. He is the healing leaf. "Show the light of Thy countenance," O! Divine Redeemer, "and we shall be whole!" (Ps. lxxx. 19).

The first thing which arrests our attention in the description given by St. John of the tree of life is its situation. "*In the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.*"

The river softly rolling down, and thus forming a street on each side of it, while the inhabitants are free to approach and pluck the tempting fruit.

Thus the Lord Jesus, the true tree of life, even now, offers to bestow life, eternal life, on the whole of Adam's apostate race. No one is shut out from approach, and from participation. Yea, so grieved is He to discover the reluctance of many to accept of His professed goodness, that He is heard in mournful tones to say, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life" (St. John v. 40).

"Here is rejection of the Christ; refusal of the life; deliberate standing aloof from the fountain of life; pro-

fessing to seek the life, yet disjoining that life from the living One; turning away from that living One, when in the form of true humanity He stood before them, presenting to them this life of God; pressing to their parched lips the full cup of living water from God's eternal fountain" (Bonar).

"From this fountain of life He refreshes now in the way those that believe, of which to those that overcome He gives in their own country abundantly to drink. And both 'freely'; for life eternal in Christ Jesus is the gift of God" (Bede).

Another point to be noted in regard to the tree of life is its fruitfulness. "Which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month."

In Jesus, the Divine Redeemer, the tree of life, is found every kind of exalted happiness, and never-ending bliss, suited to the varied tastes and capacities of His ransomed people. Abundance, variety, and perpetuity; these are the characteristics of the tree of life. The supply never fails, and the tree is never barren.

The wants of our fallen race are various, and demand various relief.

"You are enslaved by sin," the Saviour says to us in the extremity of our wretchedness, "and need redemption, and I give My 'life a ransom for sinners.' You are guilty, and My 'blood cleanseth from all sin.' You are unholy, and need sanctifying grace, and 'a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' You are weak, but 'My strength shall be made perfect in weakness.' You have tribulation in the world, but 'in Me ye shall have peace.'"

So, then, our Heavenly Father, of His abundant mercy,

"supplies all our need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philip. iv. 19).

A third characteristic of the tree of life is the salutary use of its leaves. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

It is not to be supposed from this that there will be sickness in heaven, and that its inhabitants will need to be restored to health. Such an idea is seen to be without foundation, by referring to a former chapter of this book, where we are told "there shall be no more death, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. xxi. 4).

"O, happy, happy country! where
There entereth not a sin;
And death, who keeps its portals fair,
May never once come in.
No grief can change their day to night;
The darkness of that land is light;
Sorrow and sighing God has sent
Far thence, to endless banishment."

(C. BOWLES.)

No shrouds, coffins, hearses, funeral processions; no garments of mourning there! Spotless white is the court dress of heaven. The life and health of that blessed world will have been imparted by partaking of the tree of life, and St. John means to be understood as saying that it was owing to this fact that they who dwell there had been healed of their various spiritual maladies, and had been made to live forever. The glorified citizen will there reign in glory, wearing the diadem of immortality, sealed by the mighty angel who has in his hand "the seal of the living God" (Rev. vii. 2). "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His" (II Tim. ii. 19). The leaves of or-

dinary trees are not without their use. The unsightly appearance of naked branches is relieved by this graceful covering: they catch the dew and moisture, and thus contribute to the thriftiness of the tree; and the leaves of a tree afford a grateful protection from the scorching sun. The leaves of the tree of life serve a much more important purpose. They are for "the healing of the nations." The influences of the blessed gospel bring health and cure to the people who submit to their marvellous power. Not the wisdom of state policy, extent of empire, splendid conquests, prosperous trade, and abundant resources, but "righteousness exalteth a nation" (Prov. xiv. 34).

An African prince who had been sent on an embassy to England, was amazed at the greatness and prosperity of the kingdom, and asked Queen Victoria what was the secret of all this.

Instead of making a vain-glorious display of her jewels, as King Hezekiah had done, she sent a beautiful copy of the Bible to the ambassador, saying, "Tell him that this is the secret of England's greatness."

The Holy Bible; the Christian Sabbath; the preaching of the gospel, and the sacraments of Christ,—these, and other like instrumentalities, are the "leaves" of "the tree of life," scattered broadcast through the world for "the healing of the nations." Where there are none of these Divinely appointed agencies for good, there is no tree of life, and no dead souls are made alive.

It is easy for us to know whether or not we shall enjoy the fruit of the tree of life in heaven; because it depends on this, whether or not we are plucking the fruit of it here upon the earth.

SERMON XXX.

THE CURSE DONE AWAY WITH, AND THE KINGDOM BEGUN.

(Thursday in Holy Week.)

"There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him."—REVELATION xxii. 3.

At a royal feast which Cyrus gave to the chief officers of his army, he presented to several of them costly gifts. To one he gave a gorgeous garment; to another a golden cup; but Chrysantas, his well-beloved friend, he folded in his arms, and tenderly kissed.

All the faithful followers of our dear Lord are invited to His marriage feast in heaven; and it will not be the white robe, nor the harp or the crown of gold, which will be most thought of there, but the fulfilment of His own gracious promise: "That ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom" (St. Luke xxii. 30).

St. John, in his gorgeous symbolism, having brought us within the gates of the heavenly city, and pointed out its matchless beauty, having directed our attention to the Light of the New Jerusalem, to the river of life, and the tree with its twelve harvests, now speaks of the blessed condition of those who have come to dwell in it forever. "There shall be no more curse."

The very mention of the "curse" carries us back to the dismal day when our first parents disobeyed God, and were driven out from Paradise.

And, now, in this wonderful picture of Paradise regained, the beloved disciple assures us that the evil brought on us by the first Adam, has been done away with by the Redeemer, and the curse of sin is cancelled. "All is now reversed; the curse is exchanged for blessing. The cursed one is cast out of air and earth into the bottomless pit. The atmosphere is purged. The sun scorches not by day nor the moon by night. Thorns and thistles disappear. Fertility is restored to earth. The wolf lies down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid; and there is nothing found to hurt nor to destroy in the holy mountain of the Lord" (Bonar).

During the temporary absence of the great King from the distant province of His empire, things have fallen into confusion, and law and order have been set at naught.

Now (according to the vision of St. John), the prince of darkness, who has so long wielded his sceptre over such a vast multitude upon earth, will have been driven from his stronghold; and "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it."

God will reign there forever, and the principles of purity and love, which the Lamb of God came to establish, will pervade that blessed abode forever.

Heaven will not be a mere elysium of repose on whose hazy horizon no dark cloud shall rise; but we are made for activity, and the conditions of the heavenly state demand positive and uninterrupted service of God. There will be an end, indeed, of physical infirmities; an end of persecution and reproach; an end of sorrow and suffering; but, at the same time, there will be no idlers in heaven.

"His servants shall serve Him." "They serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. vii. 15).

Do not these statements clash with another in which the promise is made that God's redeemed "shall reign with Him forever"?

By no means. The blessed inhabitants of the heavenly world are servants, but they are also kings; and they look forward to an eternity of service, and an eternity of dominion.

It is, however, no degrading occupation, but a priestly-royal service to which they are called: an eternal service in the city and temple of God and the Lamb.

"In its outward shape and mode the heavenly worship (according to St. John's account of it) was worship in a prescribed, unchanging form. This form, in various parts of the divine liturgy, the apostle describes; he repeats and writes the very words he heard the choirs of the blest ones utter as they were engaged in it. . . . Again, the heavenly worship, as described by St. John, was a responsive worship. The evidences of this are very striking and peculiar. The parts of the liturgy which he records seem founded upon a comprehensive and perfect system, which includes many important particulars; first, the four living ones, the cherubim, utter their general ascription of praise and honor to God in Trinity; 'They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' Then, when they have uttered forth this glorious awakening tribute, giving glory and honor and thanks to Him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth forever and ever, the elders, the representatives of the redeemed Church, fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him

that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, and utter together their glorious response: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.' How eminently beautiful, holy, and impressive, in all the spiritual characteristics of heavenly worship, is our own earthly liturgy. There is but one sun shining upon its pages, and that is everywhere presenting the noonday of truth. It is the glorious name and character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. O let us seek to make it, and to find it, our beloved companion in a heavenly road to a heavenly home. The heart which is conformed to its teachings is certainly conformed to the will of God" (Dr. Tyng).

St. John has not yet finished his enumeration of the "good things" which shall constitute "the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (Isa. liv. 17).

Long ages before, the promise had been given: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Isa. xxxiii. 17). "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8).

And now, the beloved disciple tells us, that not only shall the faithful people of God be received within the resplendent walls of the holy city, but "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." To "see the face" of the Divine Redeemer implies nearness, blessedness, and honor.

We are reminded of our Saviour's own sweet words, spoken on the eve of His crucifixion, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (St. John xvii. 24).

We shall see our adorable Lord. The body in which

the disciples beheld Him while they watched His glorious ascension, is that in which we shall recognize Him at the last day.

Although the vision of the "Man of Sorrows" will be denied us, He will be seen, even amidst the glories of heaven, "as the Lamb that has been slain" (Rev. v. 6).

"A Lamb standing," as ready to aid; "standing as if slain," appearing in the resurrection with the cruel wounds of death.

The weakness of the Lamb slain, belongs to the Church of the redeemed, no less than the strength of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

The marks and scars so indelibly imprinted on the spotless Lamb, shall repeat, with their dumb mouths, the history of His earthly sojourn, and of our redemption.

The face of our dear Lord will not be to us the face of a stranger. We shall see how true is the vision which faith reveals to the believing soul; how like to the visions we have had of Him in the eucharistic feast!

"They shall see His face."

We can readily picture to ourselves what expression that face will wear.

I. The first to arrest our thoughts will be its look of welcome, as He utters the precious words, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world!"

II. We shall also discover in the face of our blessed Saviour an expression of intense love. It will not be mere clemency, or mercy, but love, love such as no words can possibly describe.

"His name shall be in their foreheads."

As the sign of the cross is made upon the brow of each new recruit, in holy baptism, so will the glorious name of the Redeemer be seen on the forehead of the faithful soldier, when the great Captain of His salvation summons him to His presence in heaven.

Old mediæval legends used to recount the strange story that the blessed Virgin and our Lord Himself appeared to certain devoted saints, and impressed marks,—*stigmata*,—indelibly on their bodies.

How much more enduring are the Saviour's actual manifestations to His devoted children, and the impress which he leaves upon their souls!

"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I John iii. 2).

"Born with Christ," "buried with Christ," "risen with Christ," "exalted with Christ," when admitted into the sunlight of His glory they catch the reflection of His brightness, until they "are changed into the same image, from glory to glory" (II Cor. iii. 18).

There is in Rome a splendid fresco by Guido,—The Aurora. It covers a lofty ceiling, and looking up at it from the pavement, the head grows weary and dizzy, and the figures become indistinct. A broad mirror has been ingeniously placed near the floor, and the visitor may sit down comfortably before it, and looking into the glass, enjoy the beauties of the fresco so far above him. There is no more fatigue, nor dizziness, nor undistinctness.

In like manner, Christ Jesus, even while a sojourner in this lower world, reflected the excellency of heavenly character, and through the influence of His grace we may not only know what the saints in heaven will be,

but be comforted with the assurance that we ourselves shall be like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is."

The Lord Jesus shall "change" the body of our humiliation, that it may "be fashioned like unto His own glorious body" (Philip. iii. 21).

So that as our souls shall be like Him in holiness, our bodies shall be like Him in glory. "Our whole redeemed, purified, and perfected nature, so far superior to all other of the works of Divine wisdom and power, once in such sinful ruin and desolation, then rebuilt as a glorious temple for the worship of God forever, adorned with the beauty of a most perfect holiness, fragrant with the incense of a most perfect love, and filled with the memorials of the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be taken possession of by the glory of God, as when the bright cloud came down upon the new-built temple of Jerusalem, and 'filled the house of the Lord'" (Bishop McIlvaine).

In order that all this may be brought to pass in us, eternal life must even here have its beginning in our hearts, and, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, we must be preparing ourselves to live the heavenly life throughout eternity.

When the Duke of Kent died, his daughter, the Princess Victoria, became presumptive heir to the throne of Great Britain, and would succeed to the crown, in case William IV. left no child to inherit it.

During the childhood of the princess, this fact was very wisely concealed from her, and it was only when she was twelve years old, that her mother disclosed to her the real state of the case.

"I am nearer to the throne than I thought!" was

her unaffected exclamation, and she then relapsed into silence, unable to realize the greatness of the destiny which awaited her.

Our expectations, Christian friends, are infinitely greater. We are not merely presumptive heirs of future glory, but it will only be through our own gross and inexcusable neglect, if we fail to inherit the kingdom which has been prepared for us!

SERMON XXXI.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST THE REWARD OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

(*Good Friday.*)

“He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head.”—PSALM cx. 7.

It would be easy to show, from internal evidence alone, that this psalm has direct and exclusive reference to the Messiah. The Jewish Church always considered it as prophetic of Him. The distinctive glory of Christ (spoken of in the first and fifth verses), that He should “sit on the right hand of God,” is referred to again and again in the New Testament, and is embodied in the Apostles’ Creed. Our Saviour quotes it as applicable to Himself in one of His discussions with the Pharisees (St. Matt. xxii. 43). St. Paul refers to it, to prove that Christ was superior to the highest order of angelic powers (Hebrews i. 4, 5). St. Peter also applies it to the Son of God (Acts ii. 32–36).

The great events which occupy the thoughts and move the hearts of so many millions of Christians during the awful solemnities of Holy Week are distinctly foretold in the text: “*He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head.*”

Our Lord’s exaltation to glory is made to depend upon the endurance of His terrible sufferings. The word *therefore* determines this point. In His painful pathway

to heaven, the Saviour must needs drink of the bitter waters of affliction, which rolled between Him and the throne of His glory. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews xii. 2).

It was while our blessed Lord thus "drank of the brook in the way," that the prophetic words of the psalm were fulfilled: "My heart is sore pained within Me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon Me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon Me, and horror hath overwhelmed Me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest" (Psalm lv. 4-6).

There is something so wonderful and unparalleled in the fact that Incarnate Love became a sufferer and a sacrifice, that we never fail to be astonished when the subject is brought to our notice; but, as St. Paul proves by incontestable Scriptural evidence, so every true believer is forced to acknowledge that "Christ must needs have suffered," in order that the plan of redemption might be accomplished (Acts xvii. 2, 3).

As the eternal Son of the Father, there was no distinction of will and work between them; and yet, in the days of His flesh, when the Second Person of the adorable Trinity humbled Himself to "the form of a servant," thus taking on Him for a season a separate will and work, what had before been mere concurrence became obedience.

Although the glory of the heavenly kingdom belonged to the Son of God before the world began, still, having pledged His word to redeem our souls by shedding His own precious blood for us, the resumption of

this glory depended on the fulfilment of the promise. Hence the language of the text: "*He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head.*"

The Saviour became weak and toilworn as a pilgrim, in the way of this mortal life; He drank deep of the fountain of tears, and stooped down at last to the bitter waters of death.

While the deepening shadows of Good Friday have shut out all brightness from the world, it will be profitable for us to meditate upon the crowning act of His love.

I. The sufferings of our divine Lord were necessary, in order that his actual humanity might appear.

He must take upon Him the form of a man, and be acquainted, by actual experience, with our wants and weaknesses, before He could properly offer an atonement for sin. Hence the same glorious Being who had dazzled the heavenly hosts, in the form of God, trod this earth in the form and fashion of a man. Without losing any attribute of Deity which belonged to Him before, He became wholly and perfectly a man, except that he was free from the sinful propensities common to our fallen humanity. His manhood remained human, and His Godhead remained Divine. Without this mysterious union between the two natures the Messiah could not have suffered; because the Divine nature is incapable of suffering.

While every page of the Holy Gospels affords evidence that Jesus really became man, the proofs are abundant enough that He did not cease to be God. Of these last, only one will be given, as belonging to the events of Good Friday.

Three of the Evangelists record the fact that just before our suffering Lord breathed His last, "He cried with a loud voice" (St. Matt. xxvii. 50; St. Mark xv. 37; St. Luke xxiii. 46).

"The miracle was not in the death," remarks Bishop Pearson, "but in the voice; the strangeness was not that He should die, but that, at the point of death, He should cry so loud. He died not by, but with, a miracle."

Instead of the failing strength, the ebbing pulse, and the glazing eye, which mark the death of a mortal, the loud cry of the Saviour, in the last moment of His agony, manifested His divinity.

It was not the sight of those marvellous sufferings, so meekly borne, nor the light of the sun blotted out, which wrung the reluctant confession from the proud centurion, as he stood with his rough soldiers about the cross; but we read that it was when our crucified Lord, after all those hours of anguish, "cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost," that the Roman officer declared, "truly this man was the Son of God!"

II. Another reason which made it necessary that Christ should "drink of the brook in the way," and endure the "agony and bloody sweat," was that God's holy law might be vindicated and honored.

We are sometimes gravely told that the Saviour died to confirm the truth of His doctrine by the testimony of His blood; and that He patiently suffered, to leave us an example.

True as this most undoubtedly is, it by no means sets forth the whole purpose of Christ's death, or even a principal part of it. The Scriptures distinctly declare that He suffered on the cross as an expiation for the

guilt of man, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. The Lord Jesus died for us as a ransom, a substitute, and a sacrifice, and without this idea of His atonement, the language of the Bible becomes perfectly unintelligible. Put any other interpretation upon it, and the legal sacrifices are mere shadows, without a substance, and prefigure nothing.

Human theories and speculations concerning the doctrine of the atonement, often lead into perplexing and dangerous bewilderment; while faith in Christ's death, as a sacrifice for sin, received on the authority of His own word, exerts the most powerful influence on practical religion and morality.

Jesus of Nazareth is much more to us than Lawgiver, Teacher, and an ensample of godly life. "He must be the High Priest, entering into the lowest depths; kneeling in Gethsemane, with a burden laid upon Him; hanging upon the cross, priest and victim, with the pierced hands and feet, and the wounded side, and the awful circlet of the crown of thorns, and the pale and dying lips" (Bp. Alexander's "Leading Ideas of the Gospels").

III. A third reason why it was necessary for Christ to suffer the ignominious death of the cross, was that as our "Forerunner," He might enter "within the vail," and prepare mansions of blessedness for those "who have fled to Him for refuge" (Heb. vi. 20).

By the terms of solemn compact made with the Almighty Father, the "lifting up His head" in triumph, depended upon His "drinking of the brook in the way."

The members of His body, the Church, which He "purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28), owe every thing they are, or hope to be, to the simple fact

that Christ Jesus has thus "obtained eternal redemption for them" (Heb. ix. 12).

"Unto them that look for Him," in faith and hope, "shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28).

At the last day He will not come as the world's sin-bearer, but as its Judge. The cross will have disappeared, and while the scars will be seen in His hands and feet, He will wear the kingly diadem, and be worshipped as Lord of all.

IV. Another reason for the sufferings of our adorable Redeemer was that we might have the strongest assurance that He took the deepest interest in our welfare, and was willing to make any sacrifice, to restore to us our forfeited inheritance.

"In all things it became Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii. 17).

As sinners, we need One who is "holy, harmless, and undefiled" (Heb. vii. 26), to sympathize with us.

None but the pure and the good look upon sin with abhorrence.

V. Once more, it was necessary that Christ should suffer, to teach us that we also must suffer, and to set us an example of patience.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II Tim. ii. 12).

The trials of Christians, of course, will change their form with times and circumstances; but no one need flatter himself that he is following very closely in his Master's steps, or securing a high place in heaven, who

is not, in some way, a real "partaker of the sufferings of Christ" (II Corinth. i. 7).

People who have tried to make religion an easy thing, and who have shirked from the self-denials of Lent, are by no means studying their own best interests.

Our cross and our sufferings are very different from those of the Divine Redeemer, but we can not escape them. The cross which the Christian bears will be the shadow of the Heavenly Master's, and the sufferings which he must endure will be but the overflowings of that cup, so full of bitterness.

Thrice happy for those whom Jesus has redeemed by His precious blood, that in spite of the "exceeding sorrowfulness" of His soul, as the hour of His agony drew near, and He stooped to "drink of the brook in the way," that He turned not aside from the mighty purpose which had brought Him down from heaven.

The severe conditions by which, alone, Divine justice could be appeased, have all been fully met, and, as a reward for the suffering of that agonizing death, the Lord Jesus is now invested forever with glory and honor.

Twelve hundred years ago, the king of Lombardy was first crowned with that iron crown which is considered as the most honored symbol of earthly dignity and power. During all these ages, it has been guarded, night and day, with sleepless vigilance, in an ancient castle of Milan.

Do you wonder why this iron crown is counted more precious than diadems fashioned of purest gold, and glittering with costliest gems? Twining along amidst rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds, there is a thread of apparently common iron wire, which, tradition says, was

drawn out of one of the cruel spikes which pierced the Saviour's hands. On the first Good Friday, the rejected and crucified prophet of Nazareth, was made mock at, and spitted on, and now, the whole Christian world bows the knee before Him, and worships Him as the everlasting Son of the Father.

Verily, He, who once "drank of the brook in the way," has "lifted up His head," exulting and triumphant.

"O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame bowed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.

"O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine."

SERMON XXXII.

ENTRANCE INTO THE CITY.

(*Good Friday, NIGHT.*)

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."—REVELATION xxii. 14.

A MISSIONARY from our own land, who had made his way to Sivas, a large inland city of Turkey, was visited by two Koords,—with a view of learning what they must do to become Christians. On being asked why they wished to change their religion, they answered, "We once worshipped a cane or staff, with which the Sheik beat us, to drive away our sins; but we now believe no longer that this will save us. A good book has taught us better."

"Where did you get this book?" asked the missionary.

"We don't know whence it came from," they answered, "but it teaches us that Christ is alive, and the other prophets are dead. It teaches us to love our enemies, and pray for them."

"What is the name of this book?"

"We call it the Book of Command," they said; "a teacher reads to us from this book, the Shiek explains it, and then we pray to God through Christ, as the book teaches."

"The Book of Command,"—a most significant name

for God's Word; and the fitness of it is happily illustrated by the text: "*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*"

This city is the Heavenly Jerusalem; a glorious city, a city which hath settled foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Each of its twelve gates is of pearl; gates never shut against the redeemed; gates which lead to the palace of the great King. "The tree of life," in the Garden of Eden, was, to our first parents, the emblem and pledge of immortality. This tree symbolizes Christ Himself, and, thanks to God's goodness, the immortality which offending man lost in Adam, is restored in Jesus.

They who shall, hereafter, enter the gates of the city, and pluck the fruit of this tree of life, are spoken of in the text as "Blessed,"—as they well may be. Such is their glorious privilege, "because they keep God's commandments."

Christ has redeemed His people, in order that they may be holy; and when they have learned to take delight in running the way of God's commandments, this delight is blessedness.

The language of the text is very remarkable: "*Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.*"

Not an absolute right, founded on human merit, only by grace, yet still a right; something which they can claim. "The reception of pardon is simply in believing; but the reward is the result of good works" (Bonar).

Even when we do God's commandments sincerely; uniformly, and perseveringly, there is no proportion between

the glories of heaven, which we are to inherit, and the imperfect service we have rendered. The title to eternal life is secured to us by the undeserved goodness of our Heavenly Father, through His well-beloved Son. If it were possible for us to do more than God has commanded, He would assuredly give us credit for it, because He is just. The tendency of all—even the best of us—is to fall short of our duty, rather than to exceed it; and, hence, all must unite in the humiliating confession, "We are unprofitable servants" (St. Luke xvii. 10). Nevertheless, they who do God's commandments, have rightful access to the tree of life.

Obedience to the Divine Law constitutes our perfection and happiness, both here and hereafter. In the first Paradise, obedience was the condition of the enjoyment of its blessings; and obedience, rendered practicable by the grace, and acceptable, by the merits of the Saviour, is the condition on which fallen man is restored to the forfeited joys of immortality. The Almighty accounts those mercies which He has bestowed upon us as forgotten, which are not written in legible characters in our daily lives.

When the heroic Joshua led his victorious troops against Ai, a royal city of the Canaanites, and took it, an altar was built, as a monument of that signal mercy. An inscription was put upon the altar: and what do you suppose it was? "Surely," you will say, "it was a record of the victory!" No! it was the copy of the law of Moses, which Joshua wrote upon it;—showing that the best way to remember a mercy, is not to forget God's law.

The mere outward profession that we are followers of

Christ, will not profit; for has not He Himself declared: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. vii. 21). "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (I John ii. 4).

It will be enough to remind you of one of these commandments, to-day.

On the eve of His crucifixion, our Divine Lord instituted the Holy Communion; a service to be forever after a grateful sacrifice of both love and obedience. The command by which His people are directed to receive "the most comfortable Sacrament" of His body and blood, is as imperative as any in the Decalogue; "This do in remembrance of Me" (St. Luke xxii. 19).

On every Communion-day, when the sermon is ended, the alms collected, and "the prayer for the whole state of Christ's kingdom warring upon earth" been offered, there is a pause in the service, and a curious and painful division takes place in the congregation; a division, which, in many cases, may serve as an indication of the fearful and final hereafter. Part remain, to honor the Heavenly Feast, which the Saviour's goodness has provided, while part rise, and go their way, as if they had no concern in the matter. Many of those who thus treat the Master's gracious invitation with contempt, are quite as well prepared to receive the Sacrament as their friends, who, although fully sensible of their own short-comings, can not have the heart to disobey the dying command of their dear Lord.

The Lord's Supper was not instituted as a reward for thoroughly good people, nor a badge of saintship, but,

as the Catechism tells us, "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

And what, think you, are these benefits? Are they such as all of us greatly need, and which we can not possibly afford to lose? Let the Catechism answer: "The strengthening and refreshing of our souls, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine."

This heavenly feast is, in fact, meat and drink, to the humble and contrite recipient; it unites us more closely to Christ; it imparts strength and vigor to the soul, and nerves us anew for the great battle of life. Thus a Holy Communion is kept up, between God and man. The cravings of natural hunger make us impatient until it is appeased with food, and the health of the body requires that such nourishment be provided often, and with no long intermission.

Faith is the soul's hunger, and they who are blessed with it, will hunger after righteousness; obedience to God. If, then, the keeping of God's commandments be an evidence that we may hope, hereafter, to eat of the tree of life in the Heavenly Paradise, the neglecters of the Holy Communion can not claim to be of that number.

The Church teaches that the Holy Communion is one of the two Sacraments which God has seen fit to make "generally necessary to salvation"; *i. e.*, necessary where the opportunity is afforded for receiving them. The Lord's Supper is therefore "necessary to salvation" for you and for me. Whatever was accorded to Adam, in Paradise, while he obeyed God's law, will be vouchsafed to us, if we be obedient to the gospel. As he was

strengthened and comforted by the tree of life, so shall we be by a life of faith and humble obedience. On every Communion-day, the gracious Saviour who healed the sick, and comforted the sorrowing, in Judea, has been here to bless His people; and, yet, how many have turned thanklessly away! Might He not most justly complain, "I poured out My precious blood on the cross for them; I welcomed them to the safe enclosure of My Church; I prepared a table for them in the wilderness; I spoke to them in the tenderest words; I lifted up My pierced hands, that they might see what I had suffered for them; but they coldly turned away from Me, and professed to be afraid!"

A poor soldier who had long been accustomed to listen to those distorted views of doctrine which some imagine to be pure gospel, had very naturally got the impression that the Almighty was a sort of police sergeant, whose chief office it was to keep a sharp look-out on people, and to drag them to punishment!

It is the same shocking perversion of truth, which has hedged about the Lord's table with so much that is discouraging and alarming, and which hinders the timid from drawing near the Saviour, even when He invites them to come. The neglecters of the Holy Communion are running too much risk by persisting in this course of wilful disobedience. The end is coming on apace, when they who have obeyed God's commandments—and they only—shall "enter in through the gates into the city."

They shall gain access, not over the wall, nor by stealth, but as conquerors, in triumphal procession, their Lord and Redeemer, as the King of glory, at their head!

SERMON XXXIII.

THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR.

(Easter Even.)

"I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."—REVELATION vi., part of 9th verse.

THERE is a strange, mysterious contrast between the overwhelming darkness of Good Friday, and the soothing twilight of Easter Even.

The crown of thorns has been taken from the sacred head, and the napkin is in its place; while the countenance of our dear Lord, yesterday so majestic and resigned in suffering, is now placid in death.

On Good Friday, we were "looking unto Jesus," who died for us; and, on Easter Even, we may go on with St. Paul, to say; "who died for us, that whether we wake, or sleep, we should live together with Him" (I Thess. v. 10).

The mangled body is lying in Joseph's tomb, closely watched by the Roman guard. "There it lies, guarded by the Divinity which remains unseparated from it; attended by the angels who watch its repose, and who will herald its resurrection. Yes, as of old time, God 'rested on the seventh day from all His work' (Gen. ii. 2). It is a day then, to think of that rest which He purchased for us in the grave, to remember those who, having de-

parted from us with the sign of faith, do now rest in the sleep of peace, whose warfare is accomplished, whose iniquity is pardoned" (Neale).

We can think of them now, not only with resignation and hope, but with devoutest thankfulness and joy, because there is One who slept in Joseph's tomb, in the quiet garden, on this Easter Even, who says to all who "sleep in Him," "Because I live, ye shall live also!" (St. John xiv. 19.)

On Good Friday afternoon, when the dying robber asked to be remembered by the Saviour in His eternal and glorious kingdom, and He who had rebuked ambition in His disciples for bespeaking places of honor for themselves, when His dominion should be established upon earth (St. Matt. xx. 23), comforted the believing malefactor with the gracious assurance, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (St. Luke xxiii. 43).

In one of His parables (St. Luke xvi. 19-23), our Lord had before spoken of this Paradise, and revealed the fact that the souls of the just pass at death into one abode, and the souls of the impenitent and unpardoned into another.

Neither of these abodes is the place of everlasting happiness, or misery; but while the inmates of the one enjoy a foretaste of the perfect bliss of heaven, those who have been consigned to the other place, already experience the torments of remorse, and look forward to the unending wretchedness in store for them. "The soul, as an emanation of the Divinity, is indestructible as it is immaterial; it may be withdrawn from matter, but in its separation it exists, and in all its attributes; but in its separation from the body, its warfare is over,—the weary

are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling;—and thus, until the fulness of that time shall come, when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a great shout, and in the glory of all the holy angels, there is an intermediate state, into which passes every soul in the moment of the dissolution of its connection with the body. Though there is a middle state between death and judgment, there is no mention of a middle place between Paradise and Gehenna (the place of final torment). Judas went to ‘his own place.’ The penitent thief was on that day—the very day of his death—to be with Christ his God; and where there is the Divine Jesus, there is life and a kingdom” (Alexander Watson).

If we are of the blessed number who “die in the Lord,” this Paradise will be the abode of our souls, also, until the morning of the resurrection; and there are garnered, at this moment, the spirits of all our departed friends, who have gone hence in God’s faith and fear.

In our Lord’s description of the events of the final judgment, He is represented as then saying to His redeemed, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (St. Matt. xxv. 34). Is it not clear from this, that these blessed spirits had not yet entered into their heavenly rest? They must have been somewhere, and this intermediate state is Paradise.

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus said to His sorrowing disciples: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (St. John xiv. 2, 3).

It is evident from this promise, that the "place" which Jesus was to "prepare" for them, was in heaven, and only to be occupied by the faithful, after the awards of the final judgment had been pronounced.

While various passages in Holy Scripture, represent the condition of the blessed, in Paradise, as one of rest, and peace, and of nearness to God, we are always taught to look forward to the heavenly state, after the general resurrection, as the consummation of redemption; and it is then, only, that "mortality shall be swallowed up of life" (II Cor. v. 4). Even the triumphant declaration of the aged Paul, in his dying hour, can bear no other meaning but this: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (II Tim. i. 12).

Had he looked forward to the hour of death as introducing him, at once, into a state of "perfect consummation and bliss," the expression "that day," so emphatic and striking, would have been needless.

St. Paul believed that the Saviour would shelter his soul in the peaceful abodes of Paradise, until His glorious appearing on the morning of the great Easter.

Not to mention the passages which have been quoted and explained on previous occasions,* only one or two more will now be referred to.

As an encouragement to Christians to be faithful unto the end, St. Peter says to them, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Epis. v. 4). Would he have used such language if Christ's redeemed children were ex-

* See "Short Sermons," p. 465; "Every Sunday," p. 225; "Golden Truths," p. 220; and "Warning and Teaching," p. 287.

alted to the highest heaven, as soon as they are delivered from the burden of the flesh?

The remarkable passage from the Revelation of St. John (a part of which was read as the text) is too important to be passed over: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

Although the condition of the martyrs, in the intermediate state, is here particularly referred to, there is no reason why it may not also describe the condition of all departed saints. The account is quite too minute and graphic to be explained away as mere figurative language, intended to express the idea that the blood of the martyrs, now calling aloud for vengeance, will hereafter be requited on their murderers.

In this passage, St. John tells us that the faithful departed are at rest; that the soul is then living apart from the body; that they are not yet exalted to the highest heaven, but are "under the altar"; and that they have received a measure of happiness, a foretaste of something better in store for them: "White robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season."

How beautiful and touching is this evidence of our Heavenly Father's love! "As a parent would hush a

child's restlessness, cherishing it in her arms, and lulling it to sleep, or diverting it from the pain or the fright which agitates it; so the season of delay, before Christ comes in judgment, tedious in itself, and solitary, is compensated to the spirits of the just by a present gift in earnest of the future joy" (Newman).

The doctrine of the intermediate state, as it has thus been briefly set forth, has been held by God's people from the earliest ages. It was the universal belief of the Jews, and distinctly recognized in their public services, as it is now in our own Prayer Book. Nothing at variance with this scriptural doctrine was ever taught until A. D. 1439, when a Latin Council broached the new and unheard-of dogma, that souls of high spiritual attainment passed immediately into the bliss of heaven, while impenitent souls were sent to the place of final punishment, but that those who, at death, are in a state of imperfect grace, go to purgatory, where, by masses and money, they may become better, and, finally, be released from torment.

Purgatory is a fiction, without foundation in Scripture, reason, or primitive tradition; repudiated by the Greek Church, and spoken of with hesitation and doubt by not a few writers of the Romish Church itself.

The faithful departed are in Paradise, a state of repose, rest, and security; but one which comes short of the glory which shall be revealed in them, after the general resurrection, at the last day.

Whatever death may be, it is a very different thing from what it was before the Saviour died, and the grave is not the same thing it was before God's Holy One reposed in it, on this Easter Eve.

Buried with Him, in baptism, we are made His children, by adoption and grace; and, by watchfulness, and prayer, and self-denial, and a devout reception of the Lord's Supper, we are helped forward in the way towards the land of everlasting life.

And, now, in this Easter Even twilight, we take a parting look at our dear Lord, lying in the tomb, overshadowed by the trees of Joseph's garden. If not already a victor, He is, at any rate, enjoying rest. Those pale, mute lips seem to say: "I sleep the sleep of death, to make the grave a place of calm repose, to My beloved, and to drive away their fears!"

Even now, the Divine Redeemer, who, on yesterday, bowed His head in agony on the cross, is making ready to utter, on the morrow, those words of exulting triumph: "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and death!"

It is not chance, nor fate, nor fell disease, which dissolves the union, for a season, between soul and body, but Christ Himself, the ever-living One. He keeps the keys of the invisible world, and as He leads us in, so, also, will He lead us out, safely, at the last: and, "through the grave and gate of death," we shall "pass to our joyful resurrection."

"Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep!
From which none ever wakes to weep;
A calm and undisturb'd repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes.

"Asleep in Jesus! peaceful rest!
Whose waking is supremely blest;
No fear, no woe shall dim that hour
That manifests the Saviour's power."

SERMON XXXIV.

THE DWELLERS IN THE DUST TO AWAKE.

(Easter.)

“Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”—ISAIAH xxvi. 19.

Mary of Magdela, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, sat down by the tomb of Jesus, as the shades of night closed in on the first Good Friday, while other devoted women had hastened home to prepare fresh spices and ointments for embalming the body of the Crucified One.

The two Marys seemed to have lost all that they cared for upon earth. Jesus had been the only one who had spoken kindly and hopefully to “the woman who was a sinner,” and now that He was dead, the world was buried to her, and there was no other place of comfort, but by His silent grave.

The apostles had all fled, and were scattered; some, perchance, to Bethany, and some, to the familiar shades of the Mount of Olives.

At early dawn, on this Easter morning, the women at Bethany who had been busy the live-long night, preparing their fragrant spices, set off for Joseph’s garden, in the outskirts of Jerusalem, to embalm the body of

their Lord. His hurried burial, on Good Friday, had prevented Nicodemus from attending to all the minute details which tender affection was accustomed to observe. Two parties of devoted women had arranged to meet at the tomb, to complete the embalming; the one setting off from Bethany, and the other from Jerusalem.

At six o'clock, this morning, the first company, under guidance of Salome, reach the garden, and, to their amazement, find the stone taken away from the door of the sepulchre. Supposing that the body of Jesus had been removed, Mary Magdalene, the youngest of the party, is sent back to tell St. Peter and St. John. Meanwhile, Mary, the mother of James and Salome, approaching the tomb, behold the angels, who quiet their apprehensions with the assuring words: "Be not afraid; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen. . . . Go your way; tell His disciples and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said."

While the women hastened away with their glad tidings, the Roman soldiers who had been on guard, hearing the alarm, returned to the city, to make their bewildering report.

The two angels again sat in silence, at the head and foot of the sepulchre, when the other party of women, who had accompanied Joanna, arrive at the tomb. Not having met Mary Magdalene in the city, they were astonished to find the body removed. Then the angels appeared, and the whole mystery was explained.

On each occasion when Jesus showed Himself alive, after His crucifixion, He may be said to have reaffirmed the glorious assurance of the text: "*Thy dead men shall*

live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

The doctrine of the resurrection is set forth in the Scriptures, not as a point of small importance, which we are at liberty to receive or neglect, but as one in which our very salvation is bound up. "If the dead rise not," argues St. Paul, "then is not Christ raised; and, if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. xv. 16, 17).

The objector may array every difficulty in its most formidable shape. He may delight to remind us that our bodies are all decomposed in the grave, and turned to their original dust; aye, that the elements which once formed a part of them have been borne broadcast on the winds of heaven, and have entered into new forms of existence. I know all this, and I know, too, that God has declared that the dead shall be raised, incorruptible, and, therefore, "I look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come."

Nature herself is teaching daily, by striking analogies, that a resurrection is no impossible thing. The seed cast into the ground, decays and dies; ceasing to be what it was; and then springs up afresh, yielding abundant increase. The gaudy butterfly, bursting from its grave-clothes, flies up towards heaven, in the golden sunlight; while countless buds and blossoms come forth, as from the dead, to rejoice in a new and beautiful existence.

The great fact in Christian history which is celebrated throughout the world to-day, is the most wonderful of which it is possible to conceive.

Acknowledging the power of the Almighty One, it could hardly appear a thing incredible to us that God should raise the dead; but that Jesus should not only call forth the slumberers from the grave, but that, having Himself yielded to the dominion of the destroyer, He should "have life in Himself," and rise triumphant over death. Here is something to convince us of His omnipotence.

Various miracles, in our Saviour's life on earth, had prepared the minds of His followers to expect the consummation of these marvellous displays of His divinity, in His own resurrection. The daughter of Jairus, dead, but not yet removed from the chamber where her spirit had taken its departure; the only son of the poor widow of Nain, actually carried forth to the burial; Lazarus, who for four days had reposed in the world of spirits; and those bodies of the saints which burst the bars of the tomb, and heralded the Saviour's resurrection; these several impressive lessons unite in carrying home the conviction to every Christian mind, that we shall all be raised up at the last, and that the grave will only be the resting-place of the body for a brief season.

"Because I live, ye shall live also," is the promise which Jesus gives to "all who obey Him" (St. John xiv. 19). As Adam is the author of death to the whole human race, so Jesus, the second Adam, is the author of immortality.

The world has a right to demand proofs of the resurrection of Christ, and such proofs are not wanting. The fact of His rising from the dead was the staple of all the preaching of the apostles (Acts i. 21, 22). Their great work in the world was to testify what they them-

selves had seen. The sum and substance of their teaching was this: "We twelve men know this Jesus of Nazareth. Some of us knew Him from His boyhood, and when He became a man, and began His work, we were with Him for three whole years, in the most intimate friendship, both day and night. All of us, though we were cowards, stood at a safe distance among the crowd, and saw Him crucified. We heard His dying cry, 'It is finished;' and we saw Him in the grave. He had assured us, before His death, that He would rise again, on the third day, but so weak was our faith, that when the tidings were brought to us by the faithful women; that He had indeed been seen by some of them alive, we doubted. We saw Him ourselves, and we could doubt no longer. He talked with us; He ate and drank with us, and, when He had spent forty days upon the earth, giving us directions what we should do, after His return to the Father, we went with Him to Mount Olivet, and saw Him ascend from thence into heaven. There are twelve of us who testify to this, and we are willing to prove the truth of what we say, by laying down our lives. If you doubt our word, there are five hundred other witnesses, who are ready to confirm the testimony which we give."

Surely this is evidence enough: "It was not a handful of women who fancied they had seen Jesus once, very early in the dim twilight of a spring morning, but it was half a thousand that had beheld Him. He had been seen by them not once, but often; not far off, but close at hand; not in one place, but in Galilee and Jerusalem; not under one set of circumstances, but at all hours of the day: abroad and in the house, walking and

sitting, speaking and eating, by them singly and in numbers. He had not been seen only by excited expectants of His appearance, but by incredulous eyes and surprised hearts, who doubted ere they worshipped, and paused before they said, 'My Lord and my God!' They neither hoped that He would rise, nor believed that He had risen; and the world may be thankful that they were slow of heart to believe" (Maclaren).

Well may the Church put on her beautiful garments, and sound her highest notes of praise, on the great Festival which commemorates the resurrection of her Divine Head.

It is no fiction, when cherubs, with outstretched wings, are carved in marble, and placed over the resting-places of the departed. Angels do watch over the precious dust, because glorified ones shall come forth from the lowly graves, at the voice of the Son of God.

There is a little Hindoo story of a sorrowing mother who wandered about with her dead babe in her arms, crying to the neighbors to comfort her. All pitied, but none could help. At last, one told her of the power of Buddha, and when she found the prophet, he spoke of "a grain of mustard seed," to be sought for where none had ever died. The distracted mother wandered from east to west, but Death had always traversed those regions before her, and she found not the magic seed.

The Christian mother yields up her darling with many tears, and much anguish of heart, but she knows that it is safe with Jesus, and that she shall find her lost one in a brighter world.

No wonder that Easter has more joy even than Christmas, although the one was birth without death, and the

other birth after death. Birth after death is more than birth. Death before life is the joy of the resurrection.

If we "be risen with Christ," we shall, even now, be "seeking those things which are above" (Col. iii. 1). Heaven, and its angelic ones, the glory and the crown, these will be the great object of our contemplation, and will give a bias and coloring to all our purposes in life. The things that are above are the satisfying and gladdening, the infinite and the enduring; therefore we seek them.

During Lent we are taught to think much of dying unto sin, and now, with the cheering brightness of Easter full upon us, we should be encouraged to live lives of righteousness. The deafening din of earth's "Vanity Fair" is drowned to-day, by celestial songs, rising from earthly temples, to the throne of the High and the Holy One.

The true disciple of Jesus will rise with his Divine Lord in all holy feelings and dispositions; humbling his pride, forgiving injuries, helping the poor, encouraging the weak and the tempted, and weeping with the stricken and the sorrowful.

If any one devoted to God, in baptism, and blessed in confirmation, is disposed to-day, to leave these sacred courts without partaking of the Paschal Feast, let him remember this saying of Him, whose rising from the dead we are now celebrating. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

SERMON XXXV.

CHRIST THE GARDENER.

(First Sunday after Easter.)

“She supposing Him to be the gardener.”—ST. JOHN xx., part of 15th verse.

ON Easter morning, when St. Peter and St. John had seen the Saviour's empty tomb, they went their way, to discuss with each other, and with the rest of the disciples, what it all could mean. The marvellous story told by the faithful women, of the vision of angels at the sepulchre at the early dawn, and the cheering words of the heavenly watchers, assuring them that Jesus had risen, filled all who heard with amazement.

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene went back, and stood weeping by the tomb. Peter and John had seen no angels, but the woman was more highly favored, for she beheld two angels, in bright array, one at the head, and the other at the foot of the sepulchre.

“Woman,” said one, in kindly accents, that assured her trembling heart, “why weepest thou?”

Mary answered, in broken, half-choked voice, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.”

So saying, she turned away from the sepulchre, towards the open garden, hardly knowing what she did.

Why does she give this sudden start? She sees a man standing before her, in the simple dress of the

humbler classes, and being in a garden, the thought naturally suggested itself that he must be the person who had charge of it.

"Woman," said the stranger, addressing her in the self-same words which the angels had used, "why weep-est thou? whom seekest thou?"

Taking it for granted, that the cause of her profound grief must be known to every one, Mary said, "Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

No reply was given, except the repetition of her own name, "Mary"; but the old familiar tone revealed the speaker.

The mistake which Mary made in supposing Jesus to be the gardener, will suggest some profitable thoughts for Eastertide. "The time being spring," as good Bishop Andrews remarks, in his sweet, quaint way, "and the place a garden, Christ's appearing as a gardener has some propriety about it."

St. Gregory had said in regard to the same circumstance, that Mary "did not mistake, in taking Him for a gardener. Though she might seem to err in one sense, yet in another she was right. In one sense, Christ may well be said to be a gardener, and indeed, is one. Christ is ever what He seems to be."

Man began his earthly career in a garden, the fairest and most lovely spot on the globe, and Jesus, the Divine Word, who made all things, was the Creator of this temporal paradise. In that sense, therefore, He may be accounted a gardener.

Again: Although man's industry and skill break up the soil, and make it ready for the seed-sowing, and

although his watchful care may protect the tender plants, it is the same Almighty Saviour who sends the early and latter rain, the gentle dew, and the genial sunshine, and covers the earth with a variegated carpet of bloom and verdure. In this sense also, Jesus may be called a gardener. And, again, at His own glorious resurrection from the dead, He did but exemplify the calling of a gardener. Nor is this to end His wonder-working power. By virtue of His own resurrection, He will raise up our bodies also. "He will change all our graves into garden-plots. Yea, He will one day turn both land and sea into one great garden, and so tend them that they shall, in due time, bring forth live bodies. Long before did Isaiah see this, and sing of it, comparing the resurrection to a garden in the spring: 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.'—Isa. xxvi. 19 (Bishop Andrews).

In one of His parables, our blessed Lord calls Himself by a name nearly the same as that of a gardener. He describes Himself as the dresser of the vineyard, who pleads that the barren fig-tree might not be cut down (St. Luke vii. 6).

It is not said in the text, that Mary Magdalene supposed Him to be a gardener, but *the* gardener; and so indeed He is; the gardener above all gardeners.

In the remarkable book of the Bible, called "The Song of Solomon," the Church is represented as a garden, and our blessed Lord as the gardener. The Church says of Him: "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (vi. 2).

In His character of a gardener, the Lord Jesus is seen walking in the midst of those who are striving to grow up into His likeness; and He it is who watches over them, and cultivates the good fruits of charity, patience, forgiveness, and perseverance, making their souls beautiful and productive as "a watered garden."

Our Divine Gardener never grows weary of this employment, and accordingly the prophet represents Him as saying: "I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa. xxxvii. 3). The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head Gardener, even as He is the Chief Shepherd, and Has a multitude of under gardeners, who labor by His direction. These go forth, at His bidding, "bearing forth good seed," and furnished with the instruments of toil. After long and patient effort, blessed by the sunshine of God's favors, and the outpourings of His grace, the glorious vision of prophecy will be made good; "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree" (Isa. lv. 13): "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad and rejoice for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. xxxv. 1).

It is said of Jesus, the Divine Gardener, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."

The first expression, His "garden," refers to the Church in its unbroken unity, as the Lord delights to see it. The second expression, in the plural, "the gardens," applies to the Church in its component parts. The first is the vast whole, the garden in the most comprehensive sense, containing all plants, fruits, and flowers. Each separate part, in its appointed order, is a garden also,

in which each tree and shrub is of the Lord's own planting, that He may be glorified of all.

In the passage just quoted from the "Song of Solomon," Christ is represented as having a special purpose in entering the garden; "to feed therein, and gather lilies."

"Gathering lilies." This expression is very beautiful. The exact word in the original means "binding them together." The Lord is said to come into His garden, and bind the lilies together, as gleaners bind the separate ears of corn into one sheaf. While the work of the great enemy of souls is to divide and to scatter, the Divine Gardener comes to bind His people together into one body.

What a careful, skilful, and painstaking gardener the Lord Jesus is! As the fruits and flowers in His garden would not be safe, for any long period of time, without a permanent enclosure, the gardener has always been careful to keep up a fence about it. A divinely ordered ministry, sacraments, and a perpetual circle of feasts and fasts, and holy solemnities, constitute this fence. These things are not regulated by whim, nor caprice, but are matters of absolute necessity.

Jesus, in His character as gardener, having thus hedged about this sacred plot, takes great pains in weeding it. Ill weeds grow much faster than plants and flowers, and, therefore, the watchful gardener is careful to pluck away such noxious things as Anger, Pride, Hatred, Selfishness, and Impurity. All this labor must be patiently gone through with, before any thrifty plants can be made to grow.

The tall, overshadowing weeds would shut out the needful sunlight, and absorb the moisture. The luxuri-

ant growth of heart-weeds is one of the severest trials of the gardener. Proud Christians, selfish Christians, Christians who are completely wedded to the world, may complain that God does not hear their prayers, and that they enjoy few comforts of His grace; but there is no mystery in the case, since God Himself has explained it: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. lix. 2).

Polydorus, a pagan youth, had abandoned the evil ways in which he had been brought up, and in order to be safe from his old temptations, he withdrew into a solitary place, and renounced every worldly pleasure. When Justus, the good Christian teacher, who had instructed him in the truths of religion, and planted him in the Lord's garden by baptism, heard of this unwise step, he sought for the youth, and showing him a tree growing by a babbling brook, luxuriant with blossoms, he said: "Observe this tree! God hath given it to us for an example, that we may be rich in good fruits."

"Ah!" rejoined the despondent young man, "the tree is happy, without temptations, and the conflict against the flesh. It fulfils its destiny in silence, bearing flowers and fruit in their season."

The old Christian teacher smiled, as he said: "Would not the tree be more perfect, without the low root creeping in the dark soil, and drinking the slimy nourishment from the brook?"

"By no means," answered the young man; "the root supports the stem, and provides the tree with sap, without which there could be no fruit."

Then the old teacher applied his lesson, and let us

also give heed to it: "Despise not the senses, nor their influence. They are the low root of life. Form what this root conveys to thee, into spiritual flowers and fruit, and then, like the branches of the thrifty tree, all thy thoughts and doings will be turned towards heaven!"

Another important matter which the Divine Gardener is careful to attend to, is the improvement of the soil in His garden. The good soil comes as much from God, as the good seed which is to grow in it. In many cases the natural soil of the heart is so hard and unfriendly to the growth of Christian graces, that it must be removed by the patient gardener, and a richer soil put in its place (Ezek. xi. 19). Hence, they who desire to bring forth abundant fruit to the glory of God, can not offer up too often the earnest supplication: "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"

Nor is this all that Jesus the Divine Gardener does for His beautiful garden. He also waters and cultivates the plants which His own right hand has planted. His heavenly grace, bestowed in answer to believing prayer, and in the devout reception of the Blessed Sacrament, refreshes and revives the soul.

Charles the Fat was fond of visiting the Monastery of St. Gall, where Notker lived, a holy man who repeatedly declined a bishopric. He was the composer of "In the midst of life we are in death."

The emperor once sent a messenger to Notker, asking advice concerning the care of his soul. The monk was in the garden watering and weeding when the messenger arrived. "Tell his majesty," he said, "to do as I am doing now."

When the reply was brought to Charles, he had the

sense to say: "Yes, that is the sum of all. Away with the weeds of vice, and water the herbs of grace."

Does our blessed Lord, the true Gardener, find in us the graces which He may reasonably expect?

The dahlia would eclipse most flowers, if it had perfume equal to its beauty; but the persistent efforts of the florist have failed to impart fragrance to it.

O, that all mere formalists in religion, whose lives are rendered fair by natural amiability, would seek the help of God's Holy Spirit, that the mystic sweetness of heavenly grace may be bestowed upon them!

SERMON XXXVI.

THE THOUGHTFUL CARE OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR.

(Second Sunday after Easter.)

“Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?”—ST. JOHN xxi.,
part of 5th verse.

AFTER our Lord's resurrection, He showed Himself to His disciples, on various occasions, and under diverse circumstances, so that the fact that He had risen from the dead was established beyond all question. At the same time, He only granted them an interview now and then, that they might thus gradually become familiar with the idea that He was soon to take His departure from the world. We are not told the place of His sojourn during these memorable forty days, nor of His journeys, and other details, as might otherwise have been expected. He does not travel back with His disciples to Galilee after the feast, as in former years, but He only names a mountain in which He will meet them. They never ask Him, as He is about to leave them, whither He is going, or, when He comes, whence He has done so? His whole bearing towards them was like that to Mary Magdalene:—
“Think not that My resurrection restores Me to you as the companion of your daily life. Rejoice not over My reappearance as if I were to stay now, abidingly, with you. I go to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and yours.”

Their future career in this world, must have seemed to the apostles, very undefined and uncertain, until more minute directions had been given them. As there was no longer any common purse for the supply of their modest wants, they applied themselves, for the present, to their old occupation as fishermen. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and two others, whose names are not preserved (probably because they were not apostles), returned to the familiar shores of the Sea of Galilee. As night was the best time for fishing, they had set sail in the evening, but having toiled through all the weary hours in vain, at early dawn they rowed back, despondent, towards the land. There stood One on the shore whom they failed to recognize, in the misty twilight. It was nothing unusual for a purchaser to be awaiting the return of a fishing-boat, and the disciples were, therefore, not surprised to be accosted in a familiar way—common under such circumstances,—as if the stranger had desired to make a purchase for his morning meal. “*Children, have ye any meat?*”

“No,” was the sorrowful answer.

“Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find.”

They were only too glad to obey, and instantly the net sank, overloaded with its living freight. The incident recalled the memory of other days, and St. John whispered to St. Peter, in astonishment and delight,—“It is the Lord!”

It was, indeed, the Lord—the risen Lord—still full of thoughtful and loving care. “*Children, have ye any meat?*” was a question which He had no need to ask

He could as well have answered it Himself. His object in proposing it was to convince them that the cross and the grave had not banished them from His remembrance, nor dried up the inexhaustible fountain of His compassion. He spoke to them as a man, and as a friend.

Michael Angelo was once examining the work of a pupil, when he wrote on the canvas with his pencil, the one word, "amplius"—wider. In like manner, the resurrection of our adorable Lord has written "amplius" on the Christian's heart, since it has added a boundless eternity to the narrow domain of time. It is not, however, merely of the future that the risen Saviour has cheering and blessed assurances for His people. In this world, as well as in the next, is He able and willing to be all in all to them. It was when clothed upon with His glorified body, and when He could no longer hunger nor thirst, that He manifested the keenest sympathy for the bodily wants of the disciples; saying to them, as they drew near the land, after their fruitless night of labor, "*Children, have ye any meat?*"

The time and the manner of this appearance were both peculiar and striking. It was in the dim twilight of early morning, that "Jesus stood on the shore" (St. John xxi. 4). "It was a symbol of that eternal morning, when Jesus (who is 'the hope of them that remain in the broad sea,'—Ps. lxxv. 5), will at last appear; for the Church as yet waiteth, 'until the day break and the shadows flee away.' No longer in the ship with His disciples (as on the occasion of the former miraculous draught of fishes, when He was like one crossing the waves of this troublesome world), He is seen standing on the fixed, immovable shore! Thither 'they shall go

to Him, but thence He shall not return to them'" (Isaac Williams).

Our Lord's question in the text was very simple, but it was most suggestive. When He said to the weary fishermen of Galilee, "*Children, have ye any meat?*" they were reminded, very gently, but very effectually, of the unwearied watchfulness of their risen Redeemer.

The Christian is one with his Lord, by the gift of his new birth, and nothing can separate him from the sympathy of Jesus, but wilful sin. Sympathy is more or less perfect, in proportion to the holiness of him who claims to have a fellow-feeling with us. We can go to our risen and adorable Saviour, and tell Him all our griefs, and when the crushed and disconsolate heart has no longer any power of utterance, even then the silence of despair will appeal to the sympathy of Him, who in the hour of His bitter agony, "fell on His face," under the heavy burden of human infirmities.

A city missionary was visiting one of the most degraded courts of London, when a slatternly, hard-faced woman said to him: "You tell us that you care a great deal for us, and that you are anxious to do us all the good you can; but it is very easy for you to come from your snug home, and say this to us wretched creatures, and then go back to your comforts again. Would you be willing to live here, in the midst of all this misery, and endure these evils every day, in order to lift us up?"

I know not what answer the missionary made, but we all know of One who did much more than this. God's own blessed Son met this demand. He took upon Him our flesh, lived in the world as a poor man, and exposed Himself to trial and to death; and all to make us happy.

While Jesus had His abode upon earth, and "went about doing good," He said to His disciples, "I have compassion upon the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days, and have nothing to eat" (St. Matt. xv. 32).

He who came to seek and to save the lost, felt compassion for the bodily necessities of the people. So, also, in the text, in order to remind us that our glorified Lord is still the same, He said to the bewildered fishermen: "*Children, have ye any meat?*"

"Blessed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help," says the Psalmist; "and whose hope is in the Lord his God. Who helpeth them to right that suffer wrong; who feedeth the hungry" (Ps. cxlvi. 4-6).

Jesus did this literally, in the repeated miracle of the loaves and fishes, and spiritually, when the famine prevailed, which the prophet had foretold; "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos viii. 11). He fulfilled the promise of His own beatitude, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (St. Matt. v. 6), by feeding the multitude with the words of eternal life.

No earthly parent ever pitied a starving child as our risen Lord pities those whose souls are perishing for lack of that which alone can satisfy their cravings. He is ready to open His gracious hand, and to fill them all with plenteousness.

He who, eighteen hundred years ago, stood on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, and said, "*Children, have ye any meat?*" still repeats the question to the faint and famishing. He spreads a table before them in the wil-

derness, and feeds them with the finest wheat flour. Aye! He bids them welcome to the heavenly feast of His blessed body and blood.

If such be the thoughtful care of the risen Saviour for His redeemed children, they certainly owe a great debt of gratitude to Him, a debt which they ought to be most anxious to repay.

In the ordinary sense of payment, none of us can possibly make any, but all can show their appreciation of His goodness by striving to be like Him, and by doing those things which are pleasing in His sight.

Do you ask how you can ever be like Jesus? By doing some such unselfish act as this. Some years ago, a poor woman suffering from an acute and dangerous disorder was carried to Westminster Hospital, where she was kindly cared for by Dean Stanley's wife. She was a great lady, and an intimate friend of the queen, but she was also a follower of the meek and lowly Saviour, and as a part of her Christian duty, she was a frequent visitor at the hospital. In a sudden crisis of the poor woman's malady, it was decided by the surgeons, that the only possible chance of saving her life was by an immediate and terrible operation. The poor creature shrank, at first, from even life at such a price; and then trembling with extreme agitation, she said,—“I think if Lady Augusta Stanley were but with me, I could go through it.” A messenger went in haste to the deanery, where Lady Augusta was found just setting forth to keep an engagement with the queen. When Christ called her in the person of one of His poor children, royalty must wait. Without a moment's hesitation, she hurried to the hospital, and encouraged the sufferer to endurance, by

the strength of her sweet and tender sympathy, until relief and rest had come.

When the risen Saviour, in profoundest pity asks, now, of His people in this far-off portion of His dominion, "*Children, have ye any meat?*" He is rebuking those who, while enjoying religious privileges themselves, do nothing, and care nothing, for the spiritual destitution of the world.

God's Church is no mere "benefit club," to provide soup and bread for the hungry, and clothes for the naked (although a proper regard for bodily necessities does come within its province), but it ministers, with unwearied care, to the hunger and the leanness of the soul. The poorest member of Christ's body should look beyond the narrow circle of his own ever-present wants, that he may tell those more wretched than himself, of "that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (St. John vi. 27). A Christian child may work for Christ, and glorify His name. Early on that October morning, 1871, when Chicago was burning, the sexton of one of our churches, seeing that the fiery deluge was sweeping onward towards the house of prayer, which had become very dear to his heart, hastened, with his wife, and their two little girls, to carry away the books and communion plate to a place of safety. The chalice and paten were wrapped up, and given to the elder child, a girl of seven, while the younger sister was entrusted with the flagon. The sexton having accomplished his object, went off to assist others in trying to check the flames, never suspecting that the fire would reach his own house. He was mistaken, however, and the mother and children were obliged to escape for their lives. The elder

child, thinking only of the communion plate, once more took up her sacred burden, and gave the flagon to her sister. In the crowd of terrified people who hurried across the river, the mother was separated from her children. The raging flames sped after them, while the children wandered on for miles, until some kind stranger gave them shelter. For three dreadful days, the father searched for his children, and when, at last, he found them, the eldest girl ran to him with tears of joy, and said: "Oh father, I've saved the communion!"

Are any of you doing as much for the service of your Lord as that little child?

SERMON XXXVII.

PARDON.

(Third Sunday after Easter.)

“A God ready to pardon.”—NEHEMIAH ix., part of 17th verse.

WHEN Marie Antoinette entrusted her children to the care of a governess, who was expected to attend to their education, she addressed her a letter, in which she describes the character of the dauphin, then in his fourth year. With wonderful impartiality, the queen pointed out the faults in her son's character, and, while advising that firmness be employed on all occasions, she begs the governess to avoid every appearance of severity. “Severity would only revolt him,” and the tender mother adds: “From his very earliest childhood, the word pardon has always offended him. He will say and do all that you can wish when he is wrong, but as for the word pardon, he never pronounces it without tears and infinite difficulty.”

The application for pardon costs a great effort on the part of every offender against Infinite Goodness. The un-renewed heart clings long and fondly to the dangerous delusion, that salvation, in part at least, is of human achievement. It requires a thorough undermining of spiritual pride, before one can appreciate that wonderful truth, that we are “saved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. ii. 8);

"It is one thing to have our sins worn away from the memory, and quite another thing to have them washed away at the gospel fountain" (Fuller).

"It is remarkable that the words in all European languages which express forgiveness, or pardon, all imply free gift" (Whately).

God is the great King whose law we have broken, and yet, marvellous as it may seem, the very Being who will be our final Judge, brings to us the offer of pardon. The tribunal of justice is changed to a throne of grace and mercy. The pure and holy God could not shut His eyes to the fact that we were guilty sinners, and it was necessary that sin should be condemned in the flesh, even while it was forgiven. Here was a problem which only infinite wisdom and goodness could solve. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John ii. 2).

When the awakened sinner looks up with anxious eyes to the blood-stained cross of the Lamb of God, he beholds his Divine Redeemer and is cheered by His precious words: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa. xliii. 25). It may be asked, how can this assurance that our sins shall be "blotted out," be reconciled with other passages of Scripture, in which God is represented as keeping the transgressions of the disobedient ever before Him, and even swearing that they shall never be forgotten? The difficulty is easily explained. When the Almighty speaks of remembering the offences of His people, He has reference to the moral guilt of sin, which, in its very nature, is eternal as He

is. On the other hand, when God promises to pardon, and to blot out their sins, He is speaking of the curse and the punishment which they have deserved. The sentence of condemnation is turned aside, as soon as we have sought refuge in Christ Jesus.

Some people carry about perpetual misery in their hearts, by the impression that the life's diary written by our own hands, can never be cancelled. Thank God, we know who it is that blots out "the hand-writing that is against us, nailing it to His cross" (Col. ii. 14). So far as God's full and free forgiveness is concerned, the past may be done away with. "As sometimes you will find in an old monkish library the fair vellum that once bore lascivious stories of heathen and pagan deities turned into the manuscript in which a saint has penned his contemplations, so our souls may become palimpsests. The old wicked heathen characters that we have traced there may be blotted out, and covered over by the writing of that divine Spirit who has said, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts'" (Maclaren).

Our Heavenly Father meets the returning prodigal a great way off, and is much more anxious to welcome and embrace him, than to keep ever before him the long catalogue of his misdoings. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us" (I Thess. v. 9).

If we are ever to find real peace and deliverance from the grievous burden of sin, it can only be when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, with unhesitating confidence, as One who is both able and willing to save. By His sufferings and death He has accomplished all which would have been effected by the punishment due to our

transgressions; and from henceforth we may rejoice in the fact of our redemption, and press forward with thankfulness, in the way of peace and of safety. It was the reproach of the prophets of Israel that they "dealt falsely" with God's people, "speaking peace, when there was no peace" (Jeremiah vi. 14).

The Church constantly reminds her children that there is no peace without pardon; and hence the earnest supplication: "Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people, pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind."

No religious belief which distracts the soul in her longing gaze towards the Redeemer's cross, by any dependence on human merit, and human help, can afford that sure comfort which she so greatly needs.

It was only the other day that the world-renowned Cardinal Antonelli, being apprized that his end was near, by the appearance of Pope Pius Ninth at his bedside, became deadly pale, and with a look of the most abject dismay, turned his eyes imploringly to the decrepid old man, and said, "Most blessed father! You are the vicar of Christ, and can absolve me. In charity hear me!"

Not so died the first martyr, St. Stephen, who, being filled with the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, crying aloud in triumph, as he beheld the Divine Redeemer, who alone can pardon sins: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

The holy apostle Paul suffered martyrdom in Rome,—old, poverty-stricken, and friendless. He looked to no fellow-sinner to occupy his Saviour's place, and forgive his sins.

Grasping the pen with the hand which had so often been stretched forth to add emphasis to his impassioned words, as he proclaimed his Master's message before rulers and kings, he wrote the grand declaration of his well-grounded hope, by the dim light of the prison, from which he was so soon to be led forth to execution. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (II Tim. iv. 6-8).

When the distracted soul cries out at the remembrance of its manifold sins: "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it?" (Ps. cxxx. 3), the glad tidings comes to the humble and the contrite one, that He is "a God ready to pardon."

If the pressure of pecuniary obligations which he is unable to meet, drives sleep from a man's pillow, and plows the furrows of age on his face before his time; how much more ought every sinner unreconciled to God, to be dismayed by that long catalogue of transgressions against the Divine Law for which he is unable to atone! What madness to decline the gracious hand of Jesus; a hand stained with His own blood, which holds the ransom of your soul!

The Almighty proclaimed Himself to Moses as "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7).

No one can escape the justice of God, who has not sought His mercy.

Two cautions ought to be given to such as are foolish enough to delay making an application for pardon.

I. Be sure not to leave this all-important business to the close of life. Many are called away without warning—by accident, or by a sudden stroke of deadly sickness; and why may not this be the case with you?

The Great Being who offers the pardon, has the right to say when it will please Him to do it. And has He mentioned any time? Have you forgotten His emphatic words, "Now is the accepted time"? (II Cor. vi. 2).

An earnest Christian called on his friend, whose mind was wholly taken up with business and politics, and earnestly entreated him to make sure of God's pardon.

The answer was a very common one; he had no time just then.

A few weeks passed by, and the Christian heard that his friend was laid up at home, with a cold, and, with the persistency of true affection, he went to him again, and repeated his former advice.

"I wish you would come to-morrow," was the lame excuse, "I don't feel well enough to talk about such things now."

The next day the visit was repeated, but with no better result. On the morrow, the doctor had given orders that no one must be allowed to see him, and the direction was strictly obeyed. The next day there was crape on the bell handle. God had been "ready to pardon." The man of business and politics, who was "only laid up with a cold," had intended to apply for pardon, all in good time; but he left this world without it!

II. If it be not safe to leave the interests of the soul to be provided for, on a sick-bed, how infinitely more absurd to suppose that any thing can be done towards securing the pardon of sins after death! While the day of grace lasts, our merciful Father is "a God ready to pardon," but, at the very moment of death, "The door is shut." Credulity, such as no words can fitly characterize, must have taken possession of the mind which can read without horror, the records to be seen over the altars of mouldering saints, in Rome: "Whosoever here celebrates mass for the dead, will deliver their souls from purgatorial pains, through the merits of St. Lawrence." The superfluous merits of men and women, such as we are, deposited in a sort of bank, with the merits and satisfaction of the one only Mediator between God and man, to be drawn upon by the order of him who, only a few years ago, allowed himself to be proclaimed to the astonished world as possessing the Divine attribute of infallibility!

The word of God teaches that there is no hope of pardon after death. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

"A God ready to pardon."

Is any one disposed to say: "If I had only committed a few sins, and those not of a very heinous sort, I would go to God for pardon"?

Why should you hesitate? Jesus offers pardon to all, to the chief of sinners. He does this, not because we deserve it, but simply for His own sake, to magnify His mercy and His grace.

Does any thankless sinner, who listens to my message, smile with scorn at the eagerness with which its im-

portance has been urged? If ingratitude be guilt, how great—great beyond all conception—must be the guilt of him who makes light of God's proffered pardon!

Fancy a man out at sea, in a frail boat, but fortunate enough to have a chart and a compass. The waves are boisterous, but the sky is cloudless, and the pole-star beams brightly. He has all this to encourage and to help him. Nevertheless, he says, with dogged indifference; "I have no faith in this needle in the box, and the North Pole is nothing to me." The man drifts round and round, and reaches no friendly shore. Do you pity him? Does he deserve pity?

I have told you of "a God ready to pardon." Can there be any hope for those who make light of His goodness?

"BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK," ETC.

(Rev. iii. 2.)

"Who knocks so loud upon my heart?

Jesus, and can it be

That Thou art come, exalted One,

To sup with sinful me?

"How dare I open to Thee, Lord,

A heart so stained with sin—

Impure, unholy, all unfit

For Thee to enter in?

"Open, My child; My bleeding hands

Have knocked upon thy door,

And left their own Passover mark;

Open, and sin no more.

"But, Lord, upon my black'ning hearth

The flames of love expire,

No fuel doth my heart supply

To feed the heavenly fire.

“Open, My child; My arms are full
Of fuel for thy fire;
It is My cross—the flame it lights
Shall nevermore expire.

“But, Master, Thou art come to sup,
And, lo! my table's bare;
No fruit have I; my garden grows
But weed, and brier, and tare.

“Open, My child; though I have come
To sup with thee, yet I,
Of all the food thy soul can need
Have brought a rich supply.

“The bread of life, the wine of joy,
The milk, the honey sweet,
And every fruit the Spirit yields;
Open, My child, and eat.

“Come in, come in, Thou blessed One!
Who could resist such grace?
Or ever doubt or fear again,
Who once has seen Thy face?”

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE DOOM OF THE UNGODLY.

(*Fourth Sunday after Easter.*)

“If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”—I PETER iv. 18.

BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR stated the case and condition of the wilful offender against God, in this striking way: “If any man should contract with an impure spirit, to give his soul up at a certain day, it may be twenty years hence, upon condition that he might, for twenty years, have his vain desires: should we not think that person infinitely miserable? Every prosperous, thriving sinner is in the same condition: within these twenty years he shall be thrown into the portion of devils, but shall never come out thence in twenty millions of years.” A ruler who winked at wickedness, would soon be suspected of wickedness himself. God, who is pure and holy, must lose all the attributes of His Divine nature, before He can be blind to evil-doing. He can not, and will not acquit the wicked, except through the one glorious way in which He is just, and, at the same time, the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Those persons who are going on in their evil ways, unmindful of death, and of the great day of final account, would do well to attend to St. Peter's plain and pointed argument in the text: “*If the righteous scarcely*

be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The apostle does not say: "If the righteous be saved," as if there could be the slightest doubt of that; but, if they "scarcely," or, with extreme difficulty, "be saved." In other words: "If God's people are obliged to watch, and pray, and labor, and deny themselves, in order to work out their salvation, what possible chance of escape can there be for those who not only neglect these plain duties, but who are offending Him daily, by persisting in a course of disobedience and sin?" No chance at all. The doctrine of the text is simply this: that those people who are taught their duty, and still keep on in wrongdoing, can not be saved.

The very difficulties which every Christian encounters, in his journey towards heaven, only add force to this conclusion; sad and dismal though it be. The road to the better world passes along the brink of the pit of destruction, and it costs much watchfulness and effort to keep out of it.

"When I get to heaven," said old John Newton, "I shall see three wonders there. The first wonder will be to see many people there whom I did not expect to see; the second wonder will be to miss many people whom I did expect to see; and the third, and greatest wonder of all, will be to find myself there."

The righteous are saved with difficulty, but, thank God, they will undoubtedly be saved, but not without many and great trials. God's people have trials to endure on account of their religion (II Tim. iii. 12), and trials constitute an important part of our training in His school of discipline, and of our growth in grace (I Pet. i. 7). Trials are to them, as the furnace to the

gold, to purge away the dross, and to fit them for the Master's service.

Again: The righteous are not saved without severe conflicts.

The most exalted saint has his battles to wage with Satan, and with his own indwelling and deep-seated corruptions (Eph. vi. 12, and Rom. vii. 15, 23); and it is thus that God teaches him to be humble, and distrustful of himself.

Once more: The righteous are not saved without the gracious and ready help which God extends to them. They could not possibly escape the multiplied snares of evil, and go forward in the right way, unless strengthened and encouraged by a loving Father's hand.

If they are ever enabled to stand upright, it must be by the power of God Himself (I Pet. i. 5). It is for this reason, that they have not only been made God's children, by adoption and grace in baptism, but they have availed themselves of the other needful helps provided for them. They came to confirmation, because, in this apostolic rite, He not only confirmed the grace bestowed on them in baptism, but He gave them new gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which they are armed against temptation, and strengthened for fierce conflicts with spiritual foes.

Moreover, God's children are helped in their endeavors to be true and faithful to Him, by their frequent and devout reception of the Lord's Supper. "We may not come to the Holy Communion as to a love-feast. We must discern the Lord's body there. We come looking for a gift which we are authorized to seek therein; it is nothing less than that the Lord of glory will come to meet us, and that, besides affecting our souls through the in-

fluence of the Holy Ghost with thoughts of penitence and love and high resolve, He will, over and above that, convey to us, for the cleansing of our bodies and the washing of our souls, that pure and unstained humanity wherein He suffered on the cross" (Bishop Lay).

Devout Christians, who diligently use these and other appointed helps, are "saved," but with no superfluous strength, not a single endeavor too much; nevertheless, thank God, they are "saved"; saved from everlasting death; saved, and crowned with eternal glory.

On a recent Sunday morning, a half dozen transient travellers who were stopping at a quiet country tavern, came in from the morning service at the little church near by, and began to talk over what they had seen and heard.

"As for me," said one loud talker, "this whole matter of religion is a humbug: I don't believe any of those things!"

Twenty or thirty persons were seated about the stove, in the hotel office, and while some of them received the scoffer's bold defiance of God's truth with approbation, others, who certainly did not agree with him, and who were even shocked by his rough tone of bravado, prudently, and with the spirit of mean cowardice, held their peace. One of the guests, who had been very careful in folding his overcoat before placing it on the shelf, was evidently contending with some inward emotions, when, turning to the assailant of the Christian religion, with a quick, nervous manner, he said: "See here, my friend, pardon my confidence, but I know you are mistaken. As a ready talker you can out-do me in formal theological statement, but my consciousness, as well as my ex-

perience, shows me that you have not by any means reached the bottom of the question you are discussing."

Then, in simple words, he went on to tell of his dear old father, long past his eightieth year, bereft of property, disabled by age, blind, and lately deeply afflicted by the death of a favorite daughter, on whom he mainly depended for tender, nursing care.

"Yet," continued the son, "father sits in his chair in actual personal communion with Jesus, singing all day long, and repeating over and over, from memory, the precious promises of God; and he is happier than any prince about to be crowned as king. My mother, too, is almost a life-long sufferer from disease, sensitive to the loss of her children as only a mother can be; still more helpless because of father's extreme old age; yet she told me lately, during a night made sleepless by her acute pains, that she rejoices with unspeakable joy, because the Lord Jesus comes to her bedside, and tells her of that future glory, with which her present light afflictions are not worthy to be compared. Father knows, and mother knows, and, thank God! I know, you are mistaken; for God has power to forgive sins, and every one" (turning, in his warmth and animation to the attentive group), "every one of you may know, as an unanswerable fact, that religion is as real as your personality, and your present existence."

Alas, that any for whom Christ died, should persist in standing up, stoutly and defiantly against Him. There can be but one end to such an unequal conflict. St. Peter puts the matter in a striking light, when he concludes from the fact that even the righteous are only saved, after living lives of obedience and devotion to

God, that the enemies of God will assuredly be punished. This appeal is much stronger than any simple assertion, inasmuch as it makes every one a judge in his own cause. It clearly teaches that the perdition of the ungodly is absolutely certain.

If hell be not an abode fit for the righteous, much less will heaven be a proper dwelling-place for the wicked. Moreover, the statement of the apostle in the text is most reasonable.

If troubles and trials are often the earthly lot of the righteous, who are God's friends, what must be the bitter portion of indignation and wrath in store for His enemies? "Here is a man who denies the possibility of sin, laughs at the government of God, makes merry over the law as written in His Book, and has skeptical and blasphemous thoughts of the law written in his own heart. He strives to write over that which God has written of the law within him, with his own self-confidence and personal wisdom. Here is a poor fellow who is standing upon a rock. He has heard there is such a thing as the law of gravitation. Somebody tells him that if he casts himself down from the precipice he will certainly be killed. He says, 'No, God is too good for that; He will not allow a man like me, if I fall off that rock, to lose my life. Don't talk to me about this old philosophy. Who is Newton? What care I for him? That is all antiquated. I tell you I am a free-thinker. I have thought over this thing for myself.' And so he puts aside one law of nature, and he makes the attempt. What is the result? Can man defy God's natural laws? Equally clear is the connection between death and the Divine Law" (Stephen H. Tyng, Jr.).

St. Peter's argument is powerful and irresistible. "*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*" They will appear somewhere! The wicked will not cease to exist, as many would gladly believe. They must appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and they will assuredly be punished, eternally punished. As the salvation of the righteous will be an eternal salvation, so will the wretched portion of the ungodly be eternal also (II Thess. i. 9).

St. Paul makes mention of a hidden gospel; a gospel which "is hid to them that are lost" (II Cor. iv. 3).

He does not mean a gospel hard to be understood, or a gospel obscured by mysteries, but a gospel against which the thankless sinner has shut his ears, and hardened his heart. "An eclipsed sun, a dried up well, these are but poor emblems of a hidden gospel. If it be hidden, then the way to heaven is lost; peace is gone; life is gone; hope is gone; the anchor of the soul is destroyed. Hide the gospel, and you shut the gates of heaven; you fill earth with gloom; you make life not worth the having; death terrible; and eternity a region of unmitigated despair" (Bonar).

What could be more important for us to determine than this, whether we are living as children of God, and of the light, whose blessed portion it shall be, to obtain "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory!" (II Tim. ii. 10.)

If there were no future state, one might go on in his evil ways, without much concern; but if repentance, faith, and obedience, are essential requisites for those who are to inherit the kingdom, it is worse than madness to disregard them.

"When wounded sore, the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a pierced hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound.

"When sorrow swells the laden breast,
And tears of anguish flow,
One only heart, a broken heart,
Can feel the sinner's woe.

"'Tis Jesus' blood that washes white,
His hand that brings relief,
His heart that's touch'd with all our joys,
And feeleth for our grief.

"Lift up thy bleeding hand, O Lord!
Unseal that cleansing tide:
We have no shelter from our sin
But in Thy wounded side."

(CECIL FRANCES ALEXANDER ,

SERMON XXXIX.

THE CONVERSION OF THE PRIESTS AN EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

(Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

“A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”—ACTS vi.,
part of 7th verse.

THE Jewish priesthood was an office of great dignity and influence. Dating back to so early an age, and having been preserved in its integrity, with such scrupulous care, it is not to be wondered at that those who were set apart for the service of the altar, were regarded with respect, and often with veneration.

The office was hereditary, and the priesthood constituted a national aristocracy. Every priest could trace back his pedigree to Aaron, and no matter to what straits of poverty he might be brought, his social position was unchanged.

The young priest generally entered upon the discharge of his sacred duties about the age of twenty. Having been washed before the sanctuary, as a typical cleansing, his head was anointed with holy oil, and he was clad in his official robes. The whole ceremonial was ornate and impressive.

Henceforth, it was his peculiar privilege, to minister

before the Lord, in the Holy Place. In fact, the duties of the priests extended to such a great variety of matters, both civil and religious, that they were not only the ministers of the Lord's house, but also the judges and magistrates of the land.

Thirteen towns, within convenient distance from Jerusalem, were appointed for their residence, and during their term of service in the Temple, they occupied rooms within the sacred enclosure.

Provision was made for their support, and while they were thus secured in moderate comfort, they were also exempt from taxation, and from military service. As the office of the priesthood was hereditary, the number had become very great, during the period of our Lord's life upon earth; Josephus estimating it at twenty thousand.

For reasons plainly to be seen, the Jewish authorities arrayed themselves in bitter hostility against the Prophet of Nazareth, and the most blood-thirsty among the enemies of Jesus, were God's anointed priests.

The political condition of Palestine was then strange and anomalous. David's throne was occupied by a creature of the emperor of Rome, and foreign soldiers kept the Jewish people in subjection. "The Church outrivalled the state in degeneracy. Her priesthood, greedy, dissolute, and infidel, demanded unlawful fees for every Temple service, disgraced the religion they professed, by the inhumanity and profligacy of their lives. The Temple, repeatedly desecrated, and partially destroyed in the long and desolating wars, had been rebuilt by Herod, not from religious motives, but for political effect. Its true glory had departed. From the days of Malachi, to those of John the Baptist, no true prophet had appeared

to stem the tide of increasing corruption" (Abbott). With such a condition of things in Church and State, no wonder that the Son of God met with the cruelty that He did: no wonder that even the chief priests were loudest in their clamors, that He should be condemned to die. When the Saviour rose from the dead, His scattered followers forthwith flocked about His standard, and began their great work of the conversion of the world. The first martyr, Stephen, laid down his life for the truth. On the very eve of his ordination to the office of deacon, in the Christian Church, we are told that "the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem," and the remarkable statement is added, that, "*A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*"

It is no longer merely a company of poor, ignorant fishermen, and credulous, soft-hearted women, who are found to take sides with the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, but the very class of men who could have been least expected to make such a sacrifice. The chosen priests of the sanctuary, boasting of their lineal descent from Aaron; the aristocratic element in Jewish society, the most honored and distinguished; a body of men for whose support provision was made by the Law, of their own accord, give up all these peculiar privileges, and cast in their lot among the disciples of One who had just suffered the death of the lowest malefactor. Surely, among all the evidences afforded of the truth of the Christian religion, this is one of wonderful force and significance.

Had one or two of the Jewish priests yielded to the overwhelming proofs vouchsafed, that Jesus was indeed

the long-promised Messiah, it would have been a testimony of no little value; but how the weight of testimony is increased, when we read in the text, that "*A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*"

"A great company" of those who occupied this high social position, abandoned every thing, and exposed themselves to opposition, ridicule, contempt, persecution, and death, that they might carry out their convictions of duty, and prove, as no men have ever done more clearly, that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of all acceptance. Once, the contemptuous question had been asked: "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (St. John. vii. 48.) And yet, even then, many "among the chief rulers," already believed in Jesus, "but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (St. John. xii. 42, and xix. 38). The day was at hand, when, rising above all considerations of personal advantage, and the fear of persecution and death, "a great company of the priests," would acknowledge the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Saviour of the world. This was no mere formal confession which meant little, and which cost no personal sacrifice. "*A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*"

Faith is here put for the Christian religion, and we are assured in the brief statement of the text, that they not only embraced the truths of the gospel as an act of the understanding, but that they pledged themselves to obey its requirements.

Instead of an extended argument to establish the claims of the religion of the Son of God, branching off into the various departments of Christian evidences, I

have confined myself to a single point, that you may discover its striking significance. The very men who would be the least likely to be convinced, even by the strongest proofs, and for whose temporal advantage it was, to hold out in their opposition to the truth to the end, these men are so thoroughly persuaded, that they sacrifice every thing for Christ. Surely, then, they who, in our own day, claim to be unbelievers, ought to have very substantial ground to go upon, before they rush to the conclusion that the multitudes who have embraced the Christian faith, and who have passed into another world, cheered and comforted by its promises, have all believed a lie! Such persons come to the examination of the truth of our holy religion, with minds filled with unfriendly biases and prejudices, and with a boldness that never hesitates, nor falters, they venture to subject its sacred mysteries to the decisions of proud and unsanctified hearts.

What would be thought of a scholar who should enter upon the pursuit of any science with an avowed contempt for its claims; who should decline the assistance of an instructor, and disregard every rule insisted on for its proper investigation? Would his prospect of mastering such a science be very encouraging? Quite as much so as that of the professed unbeliever, who with no power of moral discernment or sympathy, makes light of the claims of the religion of Christ.

The bishop of Manchester (Dr. Fraser) lately related the substance of a conversation between himself, and a prominent advocate of the most recent theory of evolution (Darwinian). "You admit," said the bishop, "that this theory is only a theory; that as much can be said

against it as for it, and that the weight of actual fact, as far as known, is against it; why then do you and your colleagues so persistently cram it down the throats of the people?"

The learned skeptic coolly answered: "The fact is that this theory is the only one which makes it possible to account for life without admitting the existence of God; we are bent upon eliminating the idea of God from the minds of men, and this is the reason why we teach it so zealously, although probably it is a false theory." And so they who "do not like to retain God in their knowledge," shut their eyes to the light of truth, and blunder on in darkness.

A friend of Daniel Webster once ventured to ask whether his political opinions on an important point, then much discussed, had changed. The great statesman replied, that the questioner had better look toward Bunker Hill in the morning, and see whether, during the night, the monument had walked into the sea. Thus, too, no one need feel that he is treading on a treacherous path, until something which has at least the semblance of reason, is brought to bear against the massive foundations of the faith.

Christianity has nothing to fear from skepticism, no matter how boisterous and presuming. Its defenders, however, ought never to forget the loving, tender spirit of the Master whom they serve. With what marvellous patience did He bear with the unbelief of His own bewildered disciple, saying to the honest, but mistaken doubter: "Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and thrust thy hand into My side." Thomas demanded proofs, and Jesus gave them.

And so, when I have shown you to-day, "a great company" of Jewish priests, who became "obedient to the faith," through the overwhelming evidences which they saw of its truth, I have furnished a testimony which no gainsayer can fairly set aside.

Alas! why should any one be so blind, so insane, as even to wish to do it? This gospel, this "good spell," or glad tidings, is proclaimed to all, by a gracious Father, who desires that all should accept it, and be happy.

It is not simply forgiveness that man longs for, but advancement to a higher life; and this is what the gospel is designed to accomplish. Jesus sympathizes with us in our low estate, and seeks to elevate us to a new and heavenly fellowship. Will any of you consent to defraud yourselves of such a privilege?

SERMON XL.

ACCEPTED.

(*Ascension Day.*)

“Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.”—II COR. v. 9.

MORE than eighteen hundred years ago, on this Ascension Day, eleven men were standing on the Mount of Olives. They stood there, watching with upturned faces, One who but a few moments before had been talking with them, but who was now rising heavenward. The eleven men looked, first with wonder, and then in adoration, as He rose. They beheld Him, with uplifted hands, bestowing on them His parting blessing.

Our Lord's apostles clung to the very last, to the fond conceit that He would establish a temporal dominion. In His parting interview, He had instructed them to tarry in Jerusalem, until the promise of the Father should be fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit should come down, to be their teacher and comforter. Although the conceptions of the disciples were now more elevated, than when the sons of Zebedee sought, by early application, to secure honorable positions near His temporal throne, yet their thoughts by no means reached upward, to the reality of things. Hence, the question,

which savored too much of earthliness and ignorance: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.)

Jesus answered, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." He did not, however, leave them to waste their time in idleness, for lack of a definite object, but added, at once: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

A wide expanse of time, which man's wisdom can neither measure nor estimate, lies between this baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was to fit the apostles for their work, and the triumphant cry of victory, at the last. "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15).

The Saviour's final interview with His disciples took place in Jerusalem, and even while He talked with them, He led them forth towards Bethany. It was in some of the wild secluded mountain region that surrounds the little village, that His farewell words were spoken. "He had prepared them, as far as their dulness made possible, for His leaving them. He wished, however, to leave them in such a way that they should not think He had simply vanished from them, and wait for His present re-appearance. He would show them, as far as it could be shown, that He returned from the earth to His Father. They would be able to tell men, when they asked where He now was, that they had seen Him leave the world, and pass through the skies to the eternal kingdoms, in His human body; to sit down at the right hand of God" (Geikie).

There is no subject more inspiring and glorious for Christians to celebrate, than the ascension of our adorable Lord. It is the consummation of His whole work upon earth, since, on Ascension Day, for the first time, our humanity was taken into heaven. It was restored to the presence and favor of God, through the second Adam as the representative, the mediator and advocate of the human race. The glory of the ascension is but the crowning glory of Easter, and Pentecost signalizes the first great largess of our Joseph to His brethren.

“Our great High Priest and Shepherd Thou
Within the veil art entered now,
To offer there Thy precious Blood
Once poured on earth a cleansing flood.

“And thence the Church, Thy chosen Bride,
With countless gifts of grace supplied,
Through all her members draws from Thee
Her hidden life of sanctity.”

(“HYMNS ANCIENT AND MODERN.”)

There is something suggestive and comforting to the Christian, in the manner of our Lord's ascension. While it was, indeed, a “glorious ascension,” as it is described in the Communion Office, it was far less distinguished, by supernatural accompaniments, than His birth at Bethlehem. The hosts of heaven thronged the firmament, and, in lofty accents, proclaimed the advent of the Prince of Peace.

Had the Saviour left this world, on Ascension Day, surrounded by terrible magnificence, the shrinking heart might have feared that the final Judge of quick and dead would not be “that same Jesus,” who had once, in human

form, labored and suffered upon earth. "If He could not have been seen as He ascended up on high because of the radiance of the glories which withdrew human vision, there would have been room for the suspicion, that as He had forbidden Mary to touch Him on earth, He had gone beyond the reach of the sinful. But if you know any thing of what is sweet to the human heart in the memory of the dead, any thing of what is cheering to a Christian spirit in the assurance of the gospel, you will confess that no narrative could have been so precious as this: 'He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them'" (Melvill).

It is a pleasant thought, that even as the early disciples kept the first Ascension Day, so are we keeping it now. We are told, "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God" (St. Luke xxiv. 53). Although the disciples were well assured that they had now an Advocate in the heavenly temple, they did not forsake the earthly: "They were continually in the Temple," in prayers, and praises, and holy celebrations.

This perpetual round of sacred services, in every place where incense was offered in God's name, did not hinder, but rather helped them, in their daily work. And so we find St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, in the text: "*Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.*" These labors were the same, after His ascension, as before, and yet not the same. While He remained with them on the earth, He greeted them on their return from their missionary journeys, with words of congratulation, or He gave them friendly cau-

tions. After His ascension, such personal intercourse was ended, and while they kept on with their work, as before, there must have been a keen sense of loneliness and of separation. The Holy Spirit came down, on Whitsunday, to comfort and bless; and they could draw very near to Jesus, as we can this day, in the Holy Sacrament. The Church shows her appreciation of the Communion on Ascension Day, by appointing a special preface for it, and, in the Communion of Saints there is vouchsafed to each believing soul, the gracious presence of the King of saints. "As one among a multitude clustering round our King, each one may derive warmth from the mass, each one may perceive in his spirit the outflow of the virtue of godly zeal which streams from the fringe of His royal robe" (Compton).

Having been strengthened and refreshed, by thus communing with our risen and ascended Lord, we can go forth again, with fresh courage, to perform the daily duties, be they great or small, which may be appointed for us.

St. Francis de Sales sweetly reminds us, that the very pains of sickness, seem to set us nearer to the Man of Sorrows; and the very danger of death to which we may be thus exposed, ought to make us realize more thoroughly the Lord who overcame death.

"Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

See to it, that it be no barren profession. "Wherefore, we labor," says the apostle, in the text,—and all devoted servants of Christ will be able to say the same. "We labor," for Christ and for His kingdom; "we

labor" for our own salvation, and for the salvation of those about us.

The chaplain of the Insane Asylum, on Blackwell's Island, noticed a poor man who continually wrung his hands, and cried: "O, that I only had! O, that I only had!"

When spoken to, he would always reply, with an expression of agony on his pale face, repeating his dismal lament, "O, that I only had!" This man had once been a watchman at a railway bridge, and when the bridge was open, it was his duty to warn an approaching train, by throwing up a signal light. One dark night the man had failed to do his duty; a whole train was wrecked, and many lives were lost. When the authorities searched for him, they found a poor lunatic, whose only cry was, "O, that I only had!" May no such reproachful cry be wrung from any one of us, when our ascended Lord comes back to call us to account!

SERMON XLI.

PRESENT SUFFERINGS AND FUTURE GLORY.

(Sunday after Ascension.)

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—ROM. viii. 18.

ST. PAUL'S arithmetic is accurate, and the conclusions can not be gainsayed.

He says, in substance: "When I have counted up the sum of the sufferings of this present time, even now they amount to just nothing, in respect to that glory which shall be mine, in the world to come."

The sufferings of God's children may be sharp, but they will be short, since they are confined to "this present time." The ungodly may have good things now, but it can not be for long, and then everlasting banishment and woe. Strike the balance between the two! Which portion is it best to choose? Newman Hall describes an incident at a meeting of scholars which he attended in London. He sat as a spectator, but with the intention of defending God's truth, if it should be assailed. Soon, a blustering orator came, and said, with an effrontery, which rendered his blasphemy even more shocking, that the man who invented gas had done more for the world than any person whose name was found in the Bible. Moreover, he laughed at the idea

of God, and denied the character and work of Christ. As soon as this tirade was ended, Mr. Hall remarked that the last speaker had stated that he considered the inventor of gas as the greatest benefactor of the race: "I am glad that he has chosen his side (continued the champion of Christianity), for I know now who he worships; but I want to tell that man just this: in every life there comes a moment when darkness gathers around the mind. It is an awful crisis; and every one who is rational and sane, feels a terrible responsibility as he approaches it. When our friend draws near it, and the darkness gathers around him, will he send for the gas man? will he send for this great benefactor?"

Alas! the awful folly of any system which cuts itself adrift from a known God, and builds its hopes on the shifting sand! An expectation of ultimate advantage is that which gives activity to men in every walk of life; but, while it operates with full force in things relating to this world, its influence is scarcely felt by the generality of immortal beings, with reference to things eternal.

Much as there certainly is to render life pleasant, we can not deny that the world is full of trouble, and every one may expect his own share of it. Although the Christian is not more exposed to ordinary misfortunes than others, we will suppose, for a moment, that his lot is uncommonly hard. He may be called to endure pains of body, and anxieties of mind. His business may have become involved in hopeless entanglement. Friends may be alienated from him, and death may make fearful inroads upon the family circle. Good and bad, however, suffer alike in all these particulars. The Christian can

claim no exemption from such troubles and misfortunes, and yet he seldom suffers more from these causes than the worldly and the wicked.

There are trials which are peculiarly his. It is for him to acknowledge and bewail his manifold sins, and to mourn over the slowness of his growth in grace. His is the daily cross of obedience, the cross of trial, the cross of self-mortification, and deadness to the ways and works of evil.

God expects him, as a good soldier, to stand up for the cause of truth, though all others should oppose and ridicule him for it. His must be the patience of hope, and his a life-long struggle with temptations from without and fears within.

All this being granted, we must conclude, with the apostle, that, "If in this life only" the child of God has hope, he is, "of all men, most miserable" (I Cor. xv. 19).

Miserable, indeed, to be persecuted out of one world, and to have no other to go to!

When the Emperor Adrian was dying, he cried aloud, in despair: "O my poor soul, whither art thou going?"

When Melancthon was told by his enemies, that they would not leave him a footstep in Germany, he calmly answered: "I shall have one in heaven!" Every true Christian can say with holy Paul, "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. v. 1).

There is a glory that shall be revealed to us, and a glory that shall be revealed in us, and, taken together, they are to be understood as embracing all the blessedness of heaven.

By such considerations, Christians are to be sustained and comforted, in the midst of their sorest trials. The consoling language of the text is not to be regarded merely as the individual opinion of St. Paul, but rather as the declaration of God Himself, for the encouragement of His believing people. The apostle was nerved by this assurance to wage his own glorious warfare, and he has written it down for the encouragement of us all. He looked forth from the fallen and groaning creation, which sin had marked and debased, and he saw, through faith, the glory that shall be revealed to those that wear their cross after Christ's example, by the power of a living faith.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." As Christ is hidden, so are Christians now, as it were, sons and heirs in disguise. The day is coming on apace, "when He who is our life shall appear," and then we also "shall appear with Him in glory."

It will be the day of glory for heaven and earth. Christ's glory; creation's glory; the glory of His redeemed children. The Christian will, then, forever have ceased from sin. Neither in thought nor word shall the spirit of inward rebellion tempt him more. All the bonds and fetters of imperfection will be broken, and all holy affections, and righteous purposes of heart, shall burst forth in the very perfection of glory. It is a land far away, over a long and rugged path of many years, up weary mountains; a path through sicknesses and sorrows, and the valley of dark shadows. There is already gathered a multitude which no man can number, in the last passes of the journey, the blessed Paradise, the outer courts of the heavenly city. We all have friends, among that

happy throng, upon whom the everlasting brightness has already begun to shine; and many of us are pressing onward, in the pathway which leads to the golden gate.

While the eldest son of the Duke of Hamilton was wasting away with consumption, at the family seat, near Glasgow, cheered by the precious promises of the gospel, he longed to depart. Calling his younger brother to his bedside, he spoke to him with the tenderest affection, saying:

“And now, in a little while, you will be a duke, but I shall be a king!”

Aye! all of us, who have proved ourselves worthy, shall be made “kings and priests unto God” (Rev. i. 6).

Christ Jesus is the great Fuller, who, with His “fullers’ soap” (Mal. iii. 2), even His own precious blood, cleanses us from our sins, and thus, His matchless love makes us the “royal priesthood.”

Dr. Arnot relates that when a friend of his removed his family from a very ordinary habitation, to a large and well-furnished dwelling, the youngest boy, yet a lisping infant, ran from room to room, scanning each article with ecstasy, and calling out in childish words, at every new sight, “Is this ours, father?” He did not say “yours,” but “ours,” thus appropriating to himself, all that his father had. “Such,” he adds, “will be the surprise and joy, and appropriating confidence, with which the child of our heavenly Father’s family will count all his own, when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite of things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance,

like a stranger, saying, 'O God, these are Thine!' He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which these blessed mansions contain, exclaiming, as he looks in the Father's face, 'Father, this and this is ours!' The dear child is glad of all the Father's riches, and the Father is gladder of His dear child."

When St. Paul made his calculation, and came to his wise conclusion, that "the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared" with the eternal weight of future glory, he was passing through his earthly trials. Now they are ended, and he is safe in Paradise. What, to him, are his imprisonment and stripes; what, his painful journeyings by land and sea; the cold and nakedness; and the martyr's death? They are as a tale that is told, which men relate at home, on winter nights, while they rejoice in the safety and comfort which surround them.

My impenitent, worldly-minded hearer, you are assuredly making an unwise choice, when you consent to grasp after a little present pleasure, in forbidden paths, and must pay for it such a heavy penalty,—the loss of everlasting glory.

Self-indulgent, idle professor! how can you be promising future happiness for yourself, if you are doing nothing, suffering nothing, for Jesus now? You may be rich, and great, and honored, but unless you are living a consistent and useful life, the heavenly Master will disown you.

The Marquis of Anglesea was once presiding at a meeting of the Bible Society, when a characteristic address was made by quaint Christmas Evans. Stopping short, he turned suddenly to the marquis, and said, "I

imagine, my lord, that you have died, and that the angel of death has borne your soul to the portals of the holy city. The entrance into Paradise is jealously watched. 'Open!' shouts the angel of death, as he presses forward to secure a place worthy for your lordship.

"To whom?" asks the angelic guardian.

"To the Marquis of Anglesea."

"Who is he?"

"An old officer in the army of the Duke of Wellington."

"In that capacity," answered the door-keeper of Paradise, 'he is not on my list.'

"He has been several times lord-lieutenant of Ireland."

"He is a total stranger."

"He was the leader of the horse-guards at the battle of Waterloo."

"We know nothing of him."

"Besides that, he was for many years president of the Bible Society."

"That alters the case. He can enter in. His name is recorded in the Book."

All work, however humble, which we do for God, will count. If we do nothing, and suffer nothing, we need look for no everlasting reward.

SERMON XLII.

THE VALLEY FILLED WITH WATER.

(*Whitsunday.*)

“Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink.”—II KINGS iii. 17.

THE Moabites, once conquered by King David, had long remained vassals of the kingdom of Israel. Taking advantage of Ahab's troubles with the Syrians, they plucked up courage, and asserted their independence. The loss of revenue from this source was a grievous one, and only reluctantly endured for a season. At last Jehoram, king of Israel, prevailed on Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to join him in an expedition against the Moabites.

Accompanied by the king of Edom, they made a circuitous march, and entered the borders of Moab, on the south.

The arid country through which the allied forces were obliged to pass, soon exposed them to great distress for lack of water. God had, thus far, been quite forgotten, but now, when no human power could help, Jehoshaphat bethought him of One who can do all things. In words of dutiful submission, he said, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of

the Lord by him?" On being told that Elisha was, at that moment, in the camp, the three disheartened kings lost no time, in going in person to consult him. There was no thought of standing on their dignity, but, instead of sending for the prophet, they humbly sought him out.

Although Elisha greeted Ahab's son with words of keen rebuke, his heart was softened by his respectful tone, and he agreed to seek counsel of God.

Pausing until the soothing influence of music had quieted his ruffled spirit, Elisha amazed the suppliant kings, by the strange direction: "Make this valley full of ditches!" These artificial trenches, were to receive the abundant waters, which, as he assured them, without sign of wind or rain, should speedily fill the parched valley. All unlikely as it seemed, the Lord's power was recognized by those who had so long forgotten Him, and thousands of soldiers were soon at work, scooping out wide trenches, to receive the precious gift of God. "Large as were the trenches which the eager allies digged to receive the promised water, they were filled to overflowing. To show more distinctly that it was from the Lord, the time was that of the morning sacrifice, which was offered towards the rising sun. At that moment the waters came from the way of Edom, and filled the ditches which had been digged in the bed of a winter torrent" (Kitto).

The bright light of the rising sun reflected back from the red hills of Edom, tinged the broad surface of the water, and suggested the idea to the distant Moabites, that the allies had been engaged in bloody conflict with each other, and that they had only to rush forward and plunder their well-furnished camp. They found it, how-

ever, crowded with implacable enemies, only too well prepared to change the vision of blood into a field of terrible carnage.

We noticed, just now, in this remarkable portion of sacred history, that it was only when "the hand of the Lord" came upon Elisha, that he was inspired by the Spirit of God, to utter the strange prediction, that though the perplexed and suffering multitude should see neither wind nor rain, yet the valley should be filled with water, and that all should drink abundantly. "What! ditches in the waste, howling wilderness, where no water is! Even so: and by command of the same Spirit who, nine hundred years later, commanded Philip to show his obedience by going, when he knew not why, into another part of the same desert" (Neale).

That lowly valley in Edom, so barren and unprofitable, may symbolize the Church, all unfruitful when left to herself; but when persecution has plowed long furrows, and the Holy Spirit of God has brooded over it, sends forth the waters of comfort, to myriads of suffering souls.

There is an appeal to our faith, in the holy sacraments, even as when the direction was given: "Make this valley full of ditches." The command must be implicitly obeyed, before the desired blessing could be looked for.

The doctrine of baptism is simply this: that owing to the corruption of our fallen nature, none can enter into God's kingdom, except he be new born of the Holy Ghost. Here the remedy comes in; in the sacrament of baptism we have the outward sign of water, and the inward gift of death unto sin, and a new birth unto right-

eousness. If the unbelieving heart expresses doubt of this, and asks with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" the answer is very simple; the limited intellect of the creature has no business to demand "how" when the infinite Creator has announced a mystery.

So also, in regard to the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ. The devout believer derives solid comfort from the assurance that all who come to this holy ordinance with faith, charity, and true repentance, shall be filled with God's grace and heavenly benediction, and be assured of the pardon of their sins, and all other benefits of the Saviour's death.

No outward sign of God's inward gift can profit the soul, unless the inward gift be recognized. It is the Holy Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of life, who imparts efficacy to the Sacraments. By the operation of this Divine Agent, the elements of bread and wine are blessed and sanctified, that they may be unto us in a spiritual sense, the body and blood of Christ.

Thus are we brought face to face with the great fact in Christian history, celebrated in all lands to-day, the descent of the Blessed Spirit to abide with, and to bless, God's people always, even unto the end.

We are accustomed to speak of our salvation as springing from God the Father's love, and in a certain sense this is even so. Still more are Christians wont to place their eternal hopes on the merits and death of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so, indeed, they ought. Nevertheless, it must never be forgotten that neither the Almighty Father's abounding love, nor the atoning blood of His dear Son, would have been effectual for the rescue of one single soul from ruin, had not the Holy Spirit softened the stony

heart, thus preparing it to appreciate that love; and applied the precious blood to the sin-stained soul. In short, the efficacy of the whole plan of redemption rests upon the personality, the offices, and the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

With what triumphant joy must the little company of our Lord's disciples have celebrated the first Whitsunday in Jerusalem! After ten days of patient waiting, ten days of prayer and of expectation, the Eternal Spirit came. His presence assured them that their Divine Lord, enthroned at the right hand of the Father, had not forgotten His chosen flock. "It pleased the Lord to manifest the descent of the Spirit by signs that appeal to the senses, that by the mouth of two witnesses the fact might be confirmed; the sense of hearing (a sound like a rushing mighty wind), the sense of sight, the tongues of fire. When Joseph sent the royal chariots from Egypt, to bring his famishing father into a land of plenty, the sight of the vehicles restored Jacob's fainting heart, convincing him that his son was alive and possessed of kingly power (Gen. xlv. 26-28). In some such manner this sign from heaven was fitted to confirm in the trembling hearts of those primitive disciples, the struggling conviction of their faith, that Jesus their elder brother lived and reigned and remembered them with all His wonted love" (Arnot).

Instructed by the lessons of this holy feast of Whitsunday, let us learn to draw near to the Blessed Spirit, each day and hour as the Spirit of Holiness, that so we may grow in grace. Yea, let us remember Him always as the Spirit of Adoption, whereby alone we can realize the precious privilege of being the sons of God, and as the Divine Comforter in all the trials of life, and in the

weakness and temptation of our dying hour. The Holy Spirit is perpetually fulfilling Christ's promise to His people: "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (St. John xvi. 14). If this promise be fulfilled in us, it will be manifest in our daily lives. A practical belief in the Holy Spirit of God implies that we are aiming after something more than mere conventional morality. "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23).

St. Paul reminds Christians of a lofty privilege, and of our Heavenly Father's reasonable expectation of faithfulness in our duties, when he asks; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. iii. 16.) If we are really the sons of God by adoption and grace, our Christian character will shine forth everywhere, and we shall be adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus ii. 10).

A skilful botanist, an exile in a foreign land, was thankful to accept the position of an under-gardener in the service of a man of wealth. While filling this humble office, his attention was attracted by a rare plant which had been sent to the owner of the garden, and which had been placed in the hot-house, under the impression that it was a native of the tropics. So far from thriving, it had begun so evidently to wither and decay, that the unskilful gardener was about to remove it to a still warmer place, when the observant eye of the botanist discovered it to be a production of the arctic regions, and insisted that it should be exposed to the icy breath of winter. Forthwith it revived, and began to flourish.

In like manner, if Christians will shut themselves up in the confined and heated atmosphere of worldliness and sin, they can neither hope for growth, nor fruitfulness. Heroic conflict, in the open field, with the enemies of our salvation; the overcoming of temptation in the way of daily duty; constant communication with the Holy Spirit of God, in the use of the appointed means of grace;—these are the only safeguards for the soul.

On our Christian Pentecost, we may rejoice that the great gift bestowed on this day, was not one that spent itself in its first fulness. The Comforter is to abide with us forever. His inward gifts are the same as in the beginning: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (I Cor. xii. 7), but it is in our inward spiritual life, and not in miracles of outward and visible wonder. The Whitsunday communion is a fresh reminder of the fulness of our inheritance, and of the unexhausted gift which the Divine Love has poured forth upon us.

SERMON XLIII.

THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN.

(Trinity Sunday.)

“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.”—I JOHN v. 7.

It is not the least among the precious privileges of the children of Zion, that they know what they should believe. No one is left to grope his way, in darkness and doubt, anxiously searching for the truth, since the Church has always been God's keeper and witness of it, and has always patiently taught it. We have, therefore, nothing to do but implicitly to believe what is set down in the ancient creeds, prayers, and offices for the administration of the sacraments, and to rest assured that we are thus holding fast to “the faith once” for all “delivered to the saints” (St. Jude 3). In the grand circle of the Christian Year, there are no novelties to be proclaimed, but like the God whom it commemorates, it is the same always. There will never be a new Te Déum, or a new Creed. The songs and anthems are not for one age or country, but the worship in which we participate is a perpetual worship, and, in the Heavenly Feast to be celebrated to-day, we do show forth the Lord's death till He come.

The great doctrine of the Trinity which forms the

theme on which the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries, in every land, are expected to preach, on this high festival, is not to be regarded as a theory, or a speculation, but as a fact of our holy religion, which every branch of the Church of Christ, from the very beginning, has implicitly received. "The doctrine of the Trinity is so wound up with the whole of Christianity, that to think of removing it, and yet preserve the religion, is to think of taking from a body all its bone and sinew, and yet leaving it its symmetry and strength. The whole falls to pieces if you destroy this doctrine; and you have nothing but natural religion, a religion without a Mediator, without a Propitiation, and without an Atonement" (Melvill).

It is sheer folly for the noisy declaimers of this unsettled age, to attempt to set aside all reference to this lofty theme, on the ground that it is only a barren speculation, which may be received or rejected, without affecting the Christian character. They insist that practical subjects should be brought into the pulpit, and practical subjects only. What is a practical subject, or one that has any special influence on the daily lives of mortals, if it be not the doctrine that the world's Redeemer was a Divine Person, who, by His atoning sacrifice, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers? What is a practical subject, if it be not the substantial fact that a Divine Person, even the Holy Spirit of God, is ever at hand to help our infirmities, comfort us in our sorrows, and overrule our trials to our eternal good? The age has gone wild in its disposition to substitute frothy declamation, for the wholesome and invigorating food provided in unadulterated gospel truth. I heartily sympa-

thized with an able divine of another communion, who lately remarked to me that the masses of Christian people have become so demoralized by such an evil system, that they only show an anxiety to flock to God's house, when they have reason to suppose that they are to have the excitement of attending a sort of "spiritual picnic"!

Fortunately there is little necessity for long and labored sermons, to instruct those who are accustomed to use the Prayer Book. Beginning with our Saviour's coming in the flesh, we follow Him with reverential steps, through all His life on earth, until His return to His throne in heaven, on Ascension Day. Then, we are prepared to hail the descent of the Blessed Spirit, the Comforter, on Whitsunday; and, now, on Trinity Sunday, these different manifestations of the Almighty One are brought together, and the three Persons of the Godhead whose character and work have been presented one by one, are united in the sublime services of the sanctuary, and the triune God is worshipped and magnified by those who hope for everlasting salvation. Thus does the Church bring out her most important doctrine from an actual and vivid representation. The facts of the gospel lead directly to the doctrine, and it is impossible to commemorate the events, without discovering the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Creed is represented in our practice; and by our practice we naturally and of necessity arrive at the conclusions of the Creed.

In choosing the verse from St. John, as the text, I have no wish to disguise the fact that its authenticity has sometimes been questioned; and unless the doctrine of the Trinity had been distinctly taught in many pas-

sages of the most undoubted authority, I should not have quoted this one at all.

Never was any record so well established, as that which the Almighty Father has given concerning His Son. Friends and enemies, angels and men, have united in attesting its truth. In the text, the three Divine Persons added their confirmation of it: "*There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.*"

I. Reason and revelation, alike, teach this truth, that there is but one God. (Compare Deut. vi. 4. with St. Mark xii. 29.) A missionary in India describes an interview with an aged Hindoo, during which the latter said: "Some time ago a number of our people went to your house, and you spoke much sense to them, and gave them a book to carry back to their village. It was certainly a wise book, but it had one great fault."

"What, was that?" asked the missionary.

"It was this," answered the Hindoo; "it taught that there was only one God." The old man had fully comprehended what the Bible teaches on the subject.

II. Another point, no less clearly set forth in the Scriptures is, that while there is only one God, there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead.

The term persons is used, when speaking on this mysterious subject, because there is no other which serves the purpose so well. It is not meant, however, that these three Persons of the Trinity are, in all respects, as distinct from each other as three men would be; but only that in some particulars they are distinguished from each other, though they subsist together in one undivided essence.

An infidel was, one day, holding forth in a public room, at a watering-place, on what he called "the absurdities of the Christian religion," and, in a contemptuous tone quoted the passages, "I and My Father are one;" "I in them, and Thou in Me;" and that there are three Persons in one God. Finding that those about him did not applaud his blasphemy, he turned to one of the company, and said, with an oath, "Do you believe such nonsense?"

The gentleman pointed to a candle, and asked, "How does that candle burn?"

"Why," returned the blasphemer, "the tallow, the cotton, and the atmospheric air produce the light."

"Then they make one light, do they not?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me how they are one in the other, and yet but one light?"

"No, I can not."

"But you believe it?"

The man could not say that he did not. The conversation was instantly changed.

Not only are the three Persons of the Trinity mentioned by name, in the Bible, but they are described as discharging separate offices in the work of redemption. The Father is said to elect (Ephes. i. 4), the Son to redeem (Ephes. i. 7), and the Spirit to sanctify (Romans xv. 16).

The three Persons of the Trinity are also declared to be sources of distinct blessings to God's people.

A flippant trifler was once taught this, very simply, when she had accosted a poor neighbor with the jocose remark: "And so you worship three Gods, do you not?"

"By no means."

"Nay, but you claim to have three, Father, Son, and Spirit; and so I suppose you pray a little to each of them."

Shocked with such blasphemy, the simple-minded Christian answered: "I wish always to pray as St. Paul did: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all'" (II Cor. xiii. 14).

III. Another point taught in the Bible is that each of these Persons is God, without any difference or inequality.

I need not spend a moment in proving that the Father is God. No one denies it.

That the Eternal Son is God is established by abundant proofs. He is described as "Emmanuel, God with us" (St. Matt. i. 23); "God manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. iii. 16); "the mighty God" (Isaiah ix. 6); "God over all, blessed for evermore" (Romans ix. 5). The incommunicable name of Jehovah is bestowed upon Him, and we are taught to call Him "Jehovah, our righteousness" (Jeremiah xxiii. 6).

The Godhead of the Holy Spirit is set forth in the Bible with equal clearness. (See Acts v. 3, 4; I Cor. iii. 16; Acts xxviii. 25, etc.)

Moreover, the same attributes of eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, and almightiness which are ascribed to the Father, are also ascribed to the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Mic. v. 2; Heb. xiii. 8; St. Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20; Heb. ix. 14; Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8; I Cor. ii. 10; Gen. i. 2; Job xxvi. 73.) The conclusion to be drawn from all this, is what St. John has expressed in the text: "*There*

are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."

The testimony of these three Divine Persons relates to something in which all of us have the deepest interest, even the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Had not God Himself revealed this fact to us, we never could have ventured to believe it. We feel bound to receive the testimony of our fellowmen, when two or three of them agree in declaring a certain thing to be true. What a gross and unpardonable insult, therefore, is offered to the three Divine Persons of the Trinity, when their united testimony is doubted and denied!

A painful separation is again to be made, on this high festival, between those who love and obey God, and those who love and obey Him not. "What the cross of Jesus is, the altar, which commemorates it, also is. It separates between the good and evil. To the one, it is the very mercy-seat, let down from heaven. To the other, it is the dreadful judgment throne. If Jesus says, 'He that eateth of this bread, shall live forever,' and ye eat not, tell me, if His blessed body was not broken for you in vain!" (Bp. Doane.)

A heathen boy in a Christian land, who had become a convert to the truth, is described, in a simple ballad, as having reverently partaken of the "Heavenly Feast," and then, looking with wondering, tearful eyes, on the multitudes who turned their backs upon the table of the Lord.

"And when the holy rite was o'er,
He waited at the temple door;
Waited the coming pastor's tread,
And then, with faltering accents, said:

“‘Now tell me, man of God, I pray,
What had those wretched people done;
The many whom thou sent’st away,
Before our holy feast begun?’

“‘Nay, nay, my son, thou dost mistake;
It is the children’s bread I break,
And all are bidden to partake
Who come with faith, and come with love.
I echo but the voice above;
But these refuse, though oft besought;
They count the blood of Christ as naught.’

“‘And are they heathen, then?’ ‘Not so;
These by the name of Christians go;
But ever, as you see this day,
They cast their privilege away.’

“‘But, pastor dear, you will not shun
To warn them of the risk they run.’”

Dear friends, methinks I hear the voice of this heathen boy sounding in my ears, to-day. I say to you, then, as the Church bids me do: “Consider with yourselves how great is your ingratitude to God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads, when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord’s table.”

A truce, then, with our doubts and our fears. “I will receive the cup of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord” (Ps. cxvi. 13). “Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy” (Ps. cvii. 2).

SERMON XLIV.

ST. PAUL'S BOYHOOD.

(First Sunday after Trinity.)

"Saul of Tarsus."—ACTS ix., part of 11th verse.

SAUL, or Paul, as he was afterwards called, was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. His parents were Jews, but enjoyed the peculiar privileges of Roman citizens, which had been conferred upon that city by the Cæsars.

The date of his birth is not certainly known; although it is stated in a sermon of St. Chrysostom's, that Saul was born in the second year of the Christian era.

We are told in the book of Acts (vii. 58), that he was "a young man" at the time of St. Stephen's martyrdom, so that without the authority of St. Chrysostom to guide us, we may safely say that his birth took place during the later years of Herod's reign, or the earlier ones of his son Archelaus.

We always feel that we have known a person better, after having seen the place of his nativity, and even at this remote period of time, we are able to recall the exact features of the scenery, in the midst of which this most remarkable man passed his early days. "The plain, the mountain, the river, and the sea, still remain to us. The rich harvests of corn still grow luxuriantly after the rains in spring. The same tents of goat hair are still seen

covering the plains in the busy harvest. There is the same solitude and silence in the intolerable heat and dust of the summer. Then, as now, the mothers and children of Tarsus went out in the cool evenings, and looked from the gardens round the city, or from their terraced roofs upon the heights of Tarsus" (Conybeare). The centre of trade and traffic, the merchants of Greece and Rome flocked there with their goods, and from mixing with representatives of various people from his earliest years, Paul failed not to become acquainted with the diversities of human character, and unknown to himself, he was learning lessons of practical wisdom for the time, when, instead of being a bigoted Jew, he should be exerting a world-wide influence, as a chosen minister of Christ.

From all that can be gathered from a variety of sources, it seems probable that the apostle's father was as we say, a man "well to do" in life, but according to the admirable custom of the Jews, he brought up his son to a useful occupation, to which, in case of any change of fortune, he might, if necessary, resort. The trade chosen for the future apostle to the Gentiles, was that of a tent-maker, which would naturally have suggested itself, not only because it was a profitable employment, but from the abundance of materials for it, supplied by the goats of his native province.

A Jewish Rabbin, when speaking of the custom to which reference has just been made, bluntly says: "He that teacheth not his son a trade, does the same as if he taught him to be a thief."

So sweeping a statement may be putting the case too strongly, but, nevertheless, there is a wholesome and much-neglected truth conveyed by it.

Idleness is a sin, and labor is an ordinance of God. Happy would it be for the world, if Christian parents, following the example of the ancient Jews, would train up their children with industrious habits. No greater misfortune hardly can happen to a youth, than to be born in the lap of luxury, and to look forward to the future, not as a season of activity and of honorable effort, but as a period of unbroken self-indulgence, in which he may scatter and squander, with lavish hand, the wealth with which his forefathers have cursed him.

This will prove a useful sermon, if it shall lead fathers and mothers to form a solemn determination that their sons shall not grow up to be idlers and drones, basking in the sunshine, and waiting for the temptations of the devil, but that they shall be trained, by a thorough education, for professional usefulness, or what is no less laudable in those who have their fortunes to make, with only their brains and their bodily strength to begin with, bind them out to learn a healthful and profitable trade.

God Himself has set the seal of his approbation upon honest industry, and this fact should tell powerfully on the feelings of those to whom life is one long striving for the bare means of subsistence.

It was of our blessed Lord while He lived in obscurity at Nazareth, that the contemptuous question was asked: "Is not this the carpenter?" (St. Mark vi. 3.)

"The Idumœan dynasty that had usurped the throne of David, might display the gorgeous gluttonies of a decaying civilization; but He who came to be the Friend and the Saviour, no less than the King of all, sanctioned the purer, better, simpler traditions and customs of His nation, and chose the condition in which the

vast majority of mankind have ever, and must ever, live" (Farrar).

We are lingering about the boyhood and youth of Saul of Tarsus that we may discover, if possible, what particular circumstances assisted in the formation of that grand character which rendered him so famous in after years.

One of these, the bustling activity of city life, and another, the good sense of his father in having him taught a trade, have been noticed in their order. There is yet a third which must not be lost sight of. Many instances in St. Paul's remarkable career, show that by nature he was of an impetuous, and even fiery disposition.

A mother's restraining and gentle influence would help to control and temper this; but we have reason to believe that he also enjoyed a sister's companionship during his boyhood. Incidental reference is made to her in the closing part of the book of Acts (xxiii. 16).

To prevent St. Paul from being torn in pieces by the excited populace at Jerusalem upon the occasion of his preaching there, the chief captain commanded the soldiers to carry him to the castle of Antonia. The Jews thus robbed of their victim, formed a conspiracy to kill him, when he should be brought forth for examination. Then we are told that "When Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul."

How this youth happened to be in Jerusalem just when he was so greatly needed, we have no means of knowing; but more than likely, he had been sent there to be educated, as his uncle had been before him.

I have thus allowed myself to anticipate the regular

order of the biography, because I wished to bring out the interesting fact that St. Paul had been blessed with the companionship of a sister, and to this may safely be ascribed the cultivation of those rarer and gentler qualities which formed a part of his varied character.

I am speaking to sisters now, who have an influence over the destiny of their brothers, which no one else can exert.

God has appointed the peculiar relationship of brother and sister for a very important end. "The tributes of attention and kindness which we yield to our parents, are called forth by those whom we are accustomed to revere and obey as superiors; but those which we yield to brothers and sisters are offered to our equals. Is it not an attractive sight when we behold a brother regarding with a generous and manly pleasure the virtues, the accomplishments, and the happiness of a sister; and on the other hand, a sister watching with honest pride and joy, the expanding character of a brother, hovering around his path like a guardian angel, praying for his success, and softening his coarser qualities by the bland influence of her cultivated mind?" (Hague.)

Who can tell how many young men might be saved from the snares of the destroyer, who often sets his most successful traps for them during the unoccupied hours of the Lord's day, if sisters would show more interest in securing the attendance of their brothers at church, instead of leaving them to suppose that it was a matter about which they felt little concern.

Saul of Tarsus grew up to be a learned and accomplished man. We may easily imagine him as a boy, going, day by day, to some room connected with the

synagogue, where a company of Jewish children, seated on the ground with their teacher, were thoroughly drilled in the rudiments of learning. As years went by, his religious knowledge was increased by listening to the reading and expounding of the law; by the discussions of learned doctors, on subjects of interest and importance; and by availing himself of the privilege of asking questions of the venerable rabbies, who were always ready to answer them. The intelligent lad would be familiar with the wonderful history of his race, and his idea of the Messiah was that of a temporal Prince, coming in power and glory, to restore the down-trodden Jews, to their former privileges. While he loved his own people with all the strong affection of a devoted heart, he was taught to cherish a bitter hatred for the Gentile children whom he saw around him.

When about twelve years of age, Saul was sent to Jerusalem, to finish the education which had been begun at Tarsus. Imagination might paint a pleasant picture, of the first visit of a Hebrew boy to the Holy Land. He probably sailed in a trading vessel, accompanied by his father, or in the care of some trusted friend, gradually losing sight of Tarsus, when the heights of Lebanon would come into view. Passing round the headland of Carmel, they would cast anchor in the new harbor of Casarea, a city which Herod had rebuilt and beautified, and named in honor of the emperor of Rome. From thence, they must have made their way through Antipatris (Acts xxiii. 31), and various spots made sacred in Hebrew story.

At length, the extreme border of the tribe of Benjamin is reached, and soon the glittering roof of the Tem-

ple is seen, crowning the heights of Zion, with the ridge of the Mount of Olives in the background.

A Hebrew boy of but twelve years, must have felt a kindling glow of enthusiasm as he entered the city gates.

And, now, before closing this hasty sketch of the early days of Saul of Tarsus, I would earnestly direct the attention of Christian parents to the course which was pursued with reference to his education. A ripe scholar, as he afterwards became, well versed in the learning peculiar to his own nation, and a careful reader of classical authors in other tongues, he was taught, at the same time, his duty towards God, and led along in the old paths, trodden, for so many ages, by his devout forefathers. And will Christian fathers and mothers be less mindful of their duties, than God's ancient people? Can you who are neglecting the baptism of your children, feel unrebuked, when you see the parents of Saul of Tarsus, carrying him to the synagogue, when but eight days old, to be received as a member of God's Church?

Shall this Jewish boy be found, on every holy day, in the place of public worship, standing by his father's side, and taught by him to kneel, and respond, as the nature of the services required, and you who claim to have a better faith, take no care that your children be trained to bear their part in the worship of God's holy Temple!

Shall these Jewish parents catechise their son, with all diligence and care, that he may grow in grace and knowledge, and you fancy that you have got rid of your obligations to do likewise, simply because your children

are sent to Sunday-school, which can never be a substitute for parental instruction at home?

It may be a thankless task, to remind parents of their remissness, but it is the part of a true friend to do it, and there are few Christians, however earnest and consistent, who may not learn something useful from the few points to be gleaned from the early days of Saul of Tarsus.

SERMON XLV.

SAUL CONSENTING UNTO ST. STEPHEN'S DEATH.

(Second Sunday after Trinity.)

"The witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."—ACTS vii., part of 58th verse.

ST. PAUL'S history was traced, in a former sermon, from his birth, to his twelfth year. His, as we saw, was a well-spent boyhood, giving promise of usefulness and influence in after age.

"Is there any thing upon earth I can do for you?" said John Taylor, to Dr. Wolcott, on his sick bed.

"Give me back my youth!" he almost shrieked, in agony and despair. "Oh, give me back my youth!"

Such was the unavailing prayer of the dying satirist. Old age had brought him near to the grave's yawning mouth, and the thick pall of blindness, shut out the golden sunlight from his darkened soul.

He had outlived his day of popularity, and he had no other source of happiness. Public fame had been the football of his rhymes; parliament had been influenced by their pungency and power; yet, all unmindful of these proud days of earthly distinction, he only remembered what he had been, and vainly prayed: "Oh, give me back my youth!"

On reaching Jerusalem, Saul of Tarsus was placed under the care of Gamaliel, a distinguished Jewish teacher, who, by reason of his wisdom and candor, was held in universal esteem (Acts v. 34-40).

These rare advantages seem to have been diligently improved. Meantime, while Saul was thus spending years in study, and in fostering his national pride, and religious prejudices, by dwelling in the midst of the great ones of his day, others were growing up, not far from Jerusalem, in whose important work he was to bear no inconspicuous part.

"There was one at Hebron, the son of a priest 'of the cause of Abia,' who was soon to make his voice heard throughout Israel as the preacher of repentance; there were boys by the lake of Galilee, mending their fathers' nets, who were hereafter to be the teachers of the world; and there was One, at Nazareth, for the sake of whose love, they, and Saul himself, and thousands of faithful hearts, throughout all future ages, should unite in saying: 'He must increase, but I must decrease'" (Conybeare).

It is not impossible that Gamaliel, Saul's own honored teacher, may have been one of those learned doctors, with whom the Holy Child Jesus once conversed in the Temple. Be this as it may, it is certain that the eyes of all these persons just mentioned, looked out upon the same enchanting scenery, and their feet trod the same familiar paths. How strangely was the destiny of each one, whose early surroundings we have glanced at, afterwards to be marvellously changed, by the overruling providence of God!

Slowly the years rolled by. St. John Baptist, the Messiah's harbinger, appeared in the wilderness, preach-

ing and baptizing. Jesus then began His public ministry, and after three years space, He suffered death for the sins of the whole world.

The marvellous fact of His resurrection spread far and wide. His despairing disciples again waxed bold, and proclaimed His gospel, in spite of persecution, imprisonment, and the perils of martyrdom.

Jerusalem was in an uproar. A blasphemer (as the Jews called him) was brought to trial. The meek, but resolute Stephen, stood before the dreadful Sanhedrim, confronted by his fierce accusers. Suddenly, the countenance of the despised prisoner was lighted up with a heavenly radiance, and "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts vi. 15).

There was one then present in that crowded council-hall, who watched Stephen with looks of contemptuous hate. It was Saul of Tarsus; then grown up to manhood, thoroughly indoctrinated in all the peculiar prejudices of his race; and ready to pursue with fire and sword, the opposers of his creed.

In answer to the false and malignant charges of his accusers, the holy Stephen made a powerful defence. The judges listened with patience and pride, to his glowing recital of their national privileges and glory, but when he reproved them for their shameful neglect of the more important matters of the law, their anger knew no bounds.

St. Stephen neither saw nor heard. The council-chamber at Jerusalem had faded from his view, and, in rapt vision, he gazed upward into the glorious courts of the New Jerusalem, and cried aloud, in a transport of ecstatic delight: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and

the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" In other places where our Saviour is described in His heavenly glory, He is represented as sitting at the right hand of the Father; but here, He is said to be standing. St. Chrysostom remarks concerning this: "It is as if He had risen from His throne, to succor His persecuted servant, and to receive him to Himself."

The last exclamation of St. Stephen so exasperated the Jews, that they rushed upon him with one accord, dragged him out of the council-chamber, and with noisy tumult, hurried along the streets, passed out of one of the city gates, and near the rocky edges of the ravine of Jehoshaphat, pelted him cruelly with stones. The martyr's countenance still glowed with that angelic lustre which had for a time awed even his bitterest persecutors into respectful and mute attention, while his soul was filled with the glorious vision which he had just described.

Observe, for a moment, the chief spectator of this dreadful scene! "A young man," who was forced by no necessity to be present, but delighting to gratify his bitter hate against the followers of Jesus, and rejoicing to think that he himself, instead of a mere looker on, upon atrocities like this, should become an actor and a leader.

The false witnesses, on whose perjured testimony the holy man had been condemned, were obliged, by the law of Moses, to cast the first stone; and these had accordingly taken off their loose and flowing robes, for the more active discharge of their dreadful office, and (as we are told in the text) had "laid them down at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Twenty-seven years afterwards, when that young man

had been transformed by God's grace, into the great apostle of the Gentiles, and was preaching that gospel for the defence of which St. Stephen died, he accuses himself for the brutal part he had borne on that awful day. "When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts xxii. 20). Saul of Tarsus had heard St. Stephen's sermon, and the dying martyr's prayer.

The very next chapter of the book of Acts, after that which records the tragical event just described, opens with the painful statement, for which we are too well prepared, that "Saul was consenting unto Stephen's death."

A Spanish painter who tried his skill in portraying the martyrdom, represents Saul as walking by St. Stephen's side, towards the fatal spot, with a melancholy calmness, which is in marked contrast with the fiendish rage, depicted on the faces of the crowd. "The picture, though historically incorrect, is poetically true. The painter has worked according to the true idea of his art, in throwing upon the persecutor's countenance the shadow of his coming repentance. We can not well separate the martyrdom of Stephen from the conversion of Paul. The spectacle of so much constancy, so much faith, so much love, could not be lost. It is hardly too much to say with Augustine, that 'the church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen'" (Conybeare).

While the stones were overwhelming him, and he was fainting from loss of blood, the dying martyr had prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" What a scene it must have been in Paradise, when Saul

himself, having become a martyr also, was hailed, on his arrival there, by Stephen!

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1), and armed with the commission granted by the high priest, began his bloody work as a persecutor, in good earnest. This commission specified, that "if he found any of this way," he should bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

The Christian system is described as "the way," a term applied to it several times afterwards. (See Acts xix. 9; xix. 23; and xxiv. 22.)

Perhaps, the early disciples remembering the Saviour's declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," may have adopted it as their distinguishing title. "The word would be very precious in those troubled times. Christ was their way to the Father; faith in Him was their way to pardon and grace. 'The way' in those times was their path across the wilderness, and their entrance into rest" (Arnot).

Upon looking back upon this sad portion of the life of Saul, this reflection naturally suggests itself. What human being, however sad of heart, and given over to despair, at the remembrance of his misdoings, has a right to say, that his sins are too many, and too grievous to be pardoned?

O sinner, you may have hardened your heart against God, your gracious Father; you may have neglected His Sabbaths, and blasphemed His holy name; you may have resisted the strivings of the Blessed Spirit, which moved you to repentance; but, even now, you need not despair of God's pardoning mercy.

Saul of Tarsus was all this, and more; he was, in fact, a murderer; and yet we know how graciously the Saviour dealt with him. Here is no encouragement to continue in sin; but, assuredly, great encouragement to repent; great encouragement to test the boundless infinity of God's love. There is mercy for the worst of sinners, for there was mercy for Saul.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (II Cor. v. 19-21). Our Substitute has suffered the penalty of our transgression, and will acknowledge us at the last, if we are truly united unto Him now.

Years ago, during a war between Germany and Austria, soldiers were drawn by lot, to fill up the ranks of the German regiments. The only son of a poor widow was one of those thus called upon to shoulder his gun. The neighbors, pitying the hard lot of the helpless widow, made up the sum needed, to send a substitute for her son. The recruiting officer refused to accept the substitute, unless he would adopt the son's name. This he readily agreed to do, and when the name of the drafted youth was called, the substitute responded for him. The new regiment went forth to join the main army, and in one of the first battles, the substitute was killed.

Another draft was levied, and the widow's only son was drawn again. He declined to obey the summons, insisting that he was dead!

"Dead!" exclaimed the officer, in amazement.

"Yes! dead," answered the youth, "and if you will look over the names of those slain in such a battle, you will find it even so."

The roll was examined, and the name of the widow's

son was there, among the slain. He was dead in law, and the law had no power over him.

So, Saul of Tarsus, and all of us who have taken refuge in Christ Jesus, are dead unto sin, in its condemning power, because our Divine Substitute has endured the penalty of the law in our stead. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 1).

SERMON XLVI.

SAUL'S CONVERSION.

(Third Sunday after Trinity.)

“Why persecutest thou Me?”—ACTS ix., part of 4th verse.

THE blood of the holy martyr, Stephen, only added fresh fuel to the flames of persecution, which was waged against the Church. Jewish prejudice and hatred were stirred from their lowest depths.

Saul of Tarsus, then in his one and thirtieth year, was one of those impetuous spirits, who are so often made the tools of crafty men.

Soon after St. Stephen's martyrdom, he became an active member of the great Jewish court, an unusual position for so young a man.

From incidental references in the book of Acts, and from honest and humiliating confessions in his letters and speeches, after his conversion, it is evident that Saul entered, heart and soul, upon his bloody work. “He ‘made havoc of the Church,’ invading the sanctuaries of domestic life, ‘entering into every house’ (Acts viii. 3, and ix. 2), and those whom he thus tore from their homes, he ‘committed to prison.’ And not only did men thus suffer at his hands, but women also, a fact three times repeated, as a great aggravation of his cruelty (viii. 3; ix. 2; and xxii. 4). Nor was Stephen the

only one who suffered death (xxii. 4, and xxvi. 10). And, what was worse than scourging, or than death itself, he used every effort to make them 'blaspheme' that holy Name whereby they were called (xxvi. 11). His fame as an inquisitor was notorious far and wide. Even at Damascus, Ananias had heard (ix. 13) how much evil he had done to Christ's saints at Jerusalem" (Conybeare). Could any one have conceived that Saul of Tarsus ever would become a devoted servant of Jesus Christ?

Not satisfied with imprisoning, and torturing, and slaying the Christians at Jerusalem, he went to the high priest, and begged permission to follow those who had fled for safety to Damascus, and places even more remote. The cruel request was readily granted, and a troop of persecutors, with Saul at their head, set out in hot pursuit.

"The midday sun, with fiercest glare,
Broods o'er the hazy, twinkling air;
Along the level sand
The palm trees' shade unwavering lies,
Just as thy towers, Damascus, rise
To greet yon wearied band.

"The leader of that martial crew
Seems bent some mighty deed to do,
So steadily he speeds,
With lips firm closed, and fixed eye,
Like warrior when the fight is nigh,
Nor talk, nor landscape heeds."

(KEBLE).

Although Saul is thus unmindful of all about him, we may open our eyes upon the fair scene which spread

out before him. The white buildings of Damascus are gleaming in the distance, rising up in the midst of a green and flowery paradise. We can distinguish the Syrian gardens with their low walls and water-wheels; and the roads leading to the beautiful city seem crowded with beasts of burden, and travellers of every grade. "We know the very time of day when Saul was entering these shady avenues. It was at midday (Acts xxii. 6, and xxvi. 13). The hush of noon was in the city. The sun was burning fiercely in the sky. The persecutor's companions were enjoying the cool refreshment of the shade after their journey, and his eyes rested with satisfaction on those walls, which contained the victims of his righteous zeal" (Conybeare).

Suddenly a great and overpowering light burst forth from heaven. The whole company, struck dumb with amazement, fell prostrate to the earth. Saul's companions could distinguish no articulate sounds; but to the soul of that guilty man, the words were plain enough. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

This startling question was spoken in the Hebrew tongue. There was no mere fancy, or daydream in all this. Saul believed that Jesus, who had been crucified in Jerusalem, was dead, and therefore he had no idea of persecuting Him. "Had he been the sport of dreams, some vision of Moses or of Elijah would have formed itself in that teeming brain, and the voice that spoke to him would have said: 'Well done, faithful servant; smite home, and consume those who are changing the law of your fathers!' To St. Paul, under God, we owe the foundation of all the churches in the West. To assign to a delusive vision of an overwrought mind an

act so laden with mighty consequences, is contrary to all analogy. No life of mere man has ever been greater than his. So ardent in zeal and so calm in judgment; so heavenly in its aims and so practical in its methods; so untiring in its devotion and yet so self-possessed; so full of dignity and yet so humble. To none of us would it have occurred (had we known him in the flesh) that he had set out upon his noble mission under a delusion, the sport of a dream" (Archbishop Thomson).

Saul, fully sensible that the Being who addressed him was none other than the Great I Am, replied, in trembling tones, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The answer was unequivocal, and full of moving power: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!"

It was no ecstasy or trance, but the Son of God Himself, revealed in bodily form, to the wondering eyes of Saul.

So he regarded it at the time. He never changed his opinion on the subject. Nay, he repeats again and again, with emphatic earnestness, by word of mouth, and in his letters to the churches, that he did thus behold the Saviour for himself, and he establishes the validity of his claims to be an apostle upon this ground (I Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8).

When the glorified Redeemer said to the affrighted Saul, "Why persecutest thou Me?" it is evident, that while Saul is an enemy to Jesus, Jesus is no enemy to Saul.

"There is a peculiar meaning in the twofold repetition of the name. This formula expresses at once sharp condemnation and tender pity: 'Saul, Saul!' meant both that Saul was wicked, and Christ was merciful; both that

Saul was hating Christ, and Christ was pitying Saul. He names a sinner once, to announce the condemnation which he deserves. He names the sinner a second time, to intimate that in the blood of the Lamb that condemnation may be taken away" (Arnot).

The arrogant, persecuting Saul rose from the earth, humbled and subdued. He opened his eyes, but all was dark about him. He was stone blind. The bloody persecutor forgot his errand to Damascus, and waited for God's bidding. His affrighted companions led him by the hand, and passing beneath the gateway, and then along the street called "Straight," he was left, in silence and bewilderment, at the house of Judas (ix. 11), until the Heavenly Master who had thus marvellously called him to His service, should tell him what to do.

If we had no other instance on record, to prove the power of Divine grace to change the heart, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus would be evident enough. Skeptics and scorners may do their best to undermine our belief in this wonderful miracle, but the foundations of the faith are immovable.

Observe how the case stands. The man who was the bitterest enemy of the religion of Jesus Christ, becomes its most devoted advocate and defender. The only fair inferences to be drawn from so strange a circumstance are these: "That man can not be insincere who has suffered evils worse than death for what he believes to be the truth; that he can not be a weak man who has carried the arts of successful persuasion through barbarous and civilized men, and drawn forth from pagan pride and power, the most splendid evidences of his cogent arguments and imposing eloquence" (Sydney Smith).

Saul's conversion, besides the other mighty results which have flowed from it, has been the direct and moving cause of the conversion of other believers also.

Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, who were prominent members of a club of infidels, in 1742, agreed to write a book apiece, to damage, so far as possible, the cause of Christ's religion. Mr. West chose the Resurrection of our Lord, for his subject, and his friend, the Conversion of St. Paul. Wit, and learning, and a hatred of Christianity, all lent their aid in this work which demons might have envied them; but both infidels ended their labors by giving to the world two of the ablest treatises which have ever been published in defence of our holy faith.

For three dismal days, Saul was confined by his blindness to that solitary room in Damascus; and he passed the time in fasting and prayer. As yet, he had received no promise of forgiveness, and he mourned in secret over his wretched life of sin. His case was so peculiar that neither Jews nor Christians would attempt to offer him sympathy or help. The Jews must have regarded him with pity, or contempt, as a renegade from their faith, and Christians only knew him as one of their most unrelenting persecutors.

And so Saul waited, waited in darkness and suspense, for the fulfilment of the promise, that he should, in due time, be taught what God would have him to do.

He had been told in a vision, that the messenger of God's will to him, would be "a man named Ananias," concerning whom we only know, that there is an old tradition, which makes him one of the seventy disciples. St. Paul testifies of him, twenty-seven years afterwards,

that he was "a devout man," and one having "a good report of all the Jews" of Damascus (Acts xxii. 12).

At the end of those days Ananias came into the presence of the humbled Saul, and laying his hands upon him, said:

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (ix. 17).

Mark the miracle which followed these simple words. "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales" (ix. 18); or, in his own more vivid expression, when telling his history to Agrippa: "the same hour he looked up on the face of Ananias" (Acts xxii. 13).

Without delay, Ananias baptized the repentant Saul, that thus he might be made a member of Christ's body, and a soldier in the grand army of the cross. From that day forth, Saul seems to have been known by his new name of Paul. With him, baptism was no vain ceremony, but he received it, as all should do, for the remission of sin.

Every unrenewed soul must, like Saul of Tarsus, be turned unto God, if he would secure salvation.

As he fell prostrate to the earth, overwhelmed with the consciousness of sin, so will every returning prodigal have a lowly and self-abasing view of his own heart, and loathe himself, in dust and ashes.

There are persons now present here, with their faces turned towards some sensual Damascus, engrossed, body and soul, in pursuits contrary to God's will, and who, while they appear to be indifferent and unconcerned, have sober moments, when they experience no little disquietude

of heart. They wish, oftentimes, sincerely and earnestly, that they were at peace with God.

Harden not your hearts against these gracious feelings! They are the voice of the same God who spake to Saul, in his way to Damascus, and he who despises that voice, despises the Lord who died for him.

SERMON XLVII.

SAUL'S FIRST EXPERIENCES AS A CHRISTIAN.

(Fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

“Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”
ACTS ix. 27.

WE are now to see Saul of Tarsus in an entirely new character. He who voluntarily took part in the murder of St. Stephen, a minister of the gospel of peace! The bloody persecutor, who hastened to Damascus, to imprison and destroy the followers of Jesus, now transformed into a devoted apostle of the Christian faith! What hath God wrought!

The report that Saul had become a Christian, must have occasioned no small excitement in Damascus. Some would doubt the truth of the story. The subject would be the absorbing theme of conversation.

The converted man did not go at once to Jerusalem, or to Tarsus, his birthplace. As yet, mere novice as he was, he could not be prepared to begin his great mission, as the apostle to the Gentiles.

His first intercourse with the Christians of Damascus, is merely referred to in the simple record: “Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus” (v. 19).

St. Jerome quaintly says: "He was in the morning as Benjamin (of whose tribe he was), a ravening wolf; he divides the spoil towards evening; and then bows and reclines his head to Ananias, a sheep of the fold of Christ."

Saul must have felt himself in strange company, indeed, to be holding fellowship with those whom it had been his purpose to destroy. His burning zeal (although it was to be cured for a season) prompted him to make known to the Jews, the marvellous change which had been wrought in him; declaring in the synagogues, to their amazement and indignation, "that Jesus is the Son of God" (v. 20).

The word of the new convert increased in power, until it silenced his adversaries, who, true to their character, stirred up a persecution against him. They could not answer his arguments, and they would gladly silence him by the assassin's dagger, or by the more quiet effects of poison.

In the interval between Saul's conversion and his final escape from Damascus, it is supposed that he sojourned in Arabia. It is true, there is no mention of this in St. Luke's narrative, in the book of Acts; but in St. Paul's own letter to the Galatians, written twenty-three years later (A. D. 58), he says: "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; immediately I confessed not with flesh and blood, but I went unto Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus; then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem" (chap. i. 15-17). Arabia was south of Damascus, and not far distant.

In the case before us, we have a striking example of

the fairness and honesty of the sacred witness. St. Luke has left a chasm in the history, which he nowhere else supplies; and yet, in a letter of St. Paul's, written so many years afterwards, and with no intention of making good the missing link, the desired information is given.

Three whole years go by, before the converted Saul returns to Jerusalem, but how he was occupied meanwhile, we are not told. Probably, the object of this sojourn in Arabia was retirement, and such spiritual exercises as might better qualify him for his great work.

"Here he was physically as well as spiritually in the track of Moses, and in the track of a greater than Moses. There seems to be some mysterious necessity that one who is commissioned to lead a great exodus, should be trained beforehand in a solitude" (Arnot).

It is often supposed that the remarkable occurrence which St. Paul describes, in the second epistle to the Corinthians (xii. 1-4), took place during this period of retirement in Arabia. That he might not be accused of vain-boasting, he speaks of himself in the third person, the way in which Cæsar uniformly speaks of himself in his commentaries. "I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I can not tell; or whether out of the body, I can not tell; God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter."

When the other world is revealed, in any measure, to those who yet dwell in this one, it is after the flesh has been subdued to the Spirit, as in the case of St. Paul. Surfeiting, and gluttony, and idleness, are not the conditions in which our bodily senses can discern the things

of God. "Never in his addresses, or his letters, did he attempt reports of that season, claim credit for being a trance medium, or even allude to it. It was because he had a real communication with the ineffable light. It made him dumb, but luminous. He showed his nearness to the spiritual world, and has left the witness of it to us, in the quickening sense of its reality that streams from his pages; in the eloquence that utters his vision of the love of God, the excellence of Jesus, and the joys of a heart at peace with heaven; in his appeals for brotherly union, his denunciation of sin, from a vision of its foulness and terror, his description of the worth of charity mounting into a hymn" (Starr King).

It is impossible to say how long St. Paul remained in Arabia, but, after a time, we find him again at Damascus, "preaching boldly in the name of Jesus" (ix. 27).

The Jews, with all their skill in controversy, were not able to cope successfully with the new apostle of Christ, and hence they had recourse to the last argument of desperate men,—assassination. Night and day, they watched the city gates (Acts xii. 5); but the Christians who were most anxious for his safety, ingeniously provided means for his escape. He refers to it himself, fourteen years afterwards. From an unguarded part of the wall, and probably under the cover of darkness, they let him down from a window in a basket (II Cor. xi. 32).

We know enough of St. Paul's heroic nature to feel sure, that had he consulted his own feelings, he would have stood his ground with unflinching courage, and scorned the proposal to make good his escape.

In the infancy of the Christian Church, however, it

was necessary that the propagators of the hated religion should take some care of their lives, and, accordingly, when the apostle whose destruction was so anxiously sought for, made his escape from his infuriated enemies, it was in obedience to the Saviour's command: "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another" (St. Matt. x. 23).

Should Christians be placed in circumstances where they must either deny their Lord, or suffer death, then there should be no hesitation. Death may then be embraced with cheerful resignation, and with a glorious assurance of the martyr's crown. In all ordinary cases, they were to consult their safety even by flight.

St. Paul now set his face towards Jerusalem. His chief object in going there, at this time, was to become acquainted with St. Peter.

Few would envy him his reflections as he drew near the holy city.

There was the very place where he had so exultingly aided in torturing the blessed Stephen! The dying prayer of that patient sufferer, would certainly come back to his awakened mind. When he entered the gates of Jerusalem, where so many of his youthful days had been spent, what bewildering thoughts were suggested by the well-known spots, the Temple, the synagogue, and the school of Gamaliel!

What a grievous load he had cast off, when delivered from the burden of the law, and when his spirit rejoiced in the freedom of the gospel!

With these mingled emotions of sadness and joy, St. Paul attempted "to join himself to the disciples" (Acts ix. 26); but such vague and conflicting reports had reached

them in regard to his conversion, and change of life, that they were sorely perplexed, and, indeed, "were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (ix. 26). Then it was, that Barnabas,—the generous and noble Barnabas, who had before given so liberally of his wealth to the poor (Acts iv. 36), came forward, like a true friend, and took Paul by the hand, and brought him to St. Peter and St. James (Gal. i. 18, 19).

The intercourse between the apostles was full of comfort, and great good came of it; but it was of brief continuance. Fifteen days later, and they separated for a long season.

St. Paul, with his accustomed boldness, went to the very synagogue where his voice had once been heard in condemnation of the martyr Stephen, and proclaimed to his enraged countrymen that he had himself embraced the faith of the murdered man. Again, as at Damascus, the Jews formed a conspiracy to put St. Paul to death, and again he was saved from their fury, by the efforts of his Christian brethren (Acts ix. 29, 30).

It was not without great reluctance, that he left Jerusalem. Even after he had seen a vision in the Temple, in which the Saviour again appeared to him, and told him to depart (Acts xxii. 17–21), he hesitated, and ventured to suggest, that his ministrations might be most successful among the Jews, who had once known him as a bloody persecutor of the Christian faith. Then the command was repeated, with a peremptory sternness which brooked no further delay: "Depart; for I will send thee hence unto the Gentiles."

Accordingly, the brethren brought him to Cesarea (a city on the coast of the Mediterranean, about sixty

miles north-west of Jerusalem), and from thence, they sent him to Tarsus (Acts ix. 30).

Here let us pause in the narrative, and notice the means by which Saul's conversion was accomplished, as briefly set forth in the text: "*Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*"

Here, in substance, is the history of every conversion. The Lord showed Himself to Saul, and self-will and unbelief bowed down before the heavenly vision.

The Lord spoke to him, very briefly, but very plainly: "I am Jesus."

In other words: "Thou art a sinner, blind and self-righteous, and even a persecutor, but I am ready to be thy Saviour."

And, so, with all who are converted from the power of Satan unto God. They are not all spoken to in the same way, nor are all converted suddenly, as Saul was; but all can bear witness that Jesus has met them, while they sought Him in prayer, or listened to the preaching of His word, and then, deliverance came, and gladness of heart.

"I stood outside the gate,
 A poor, wayfaring child;
 Within my heart there beat
 A tempest, loud and wild.
 A fear oppressed my soul,
 That I might be *too late*;
 And oh! I trembled sore,
 And prayed outside the gate.

“‘Mercy!’ I loudly cried,
 ‘Oh! give me rest from sin!’
‘I will,’ a voice replied,
 And Mercy let me in.
She bound my bleeding wounds;
She eased my burdened soul,
And bore the load instead.

“In Mercy’s guise, I knew
 The Saviour long abused;
Who often sought my heart,
 And wept when I refused.
Oh! what a blest return
 For ignorance and sin!
I stood outside the gate,
 And Jesus let me in!”

(JOSEPHINE POLLARD.)

SERMON XLVIII.

A PRUDENT MAN.

(Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

“A prudent man.”—ACTS xiii., part of 7th verse.

ST. PAUL, having escaped from those who sought to murder him in Jerusalem, returned to Tarsus. He had now reached his thirty-fourth year, and was just in the vigor of life.

Strange emotions must have stirred within him, when he thus came back to his birthplace, and the home of his early youth. Appearing now in his new character, as a minister of Christ, he would be brought into direct conflict with the philosophers and Jewish teachers of Tarsus, and many must have been the sharp controversies between them.

During this sojourn in his native city, the apostle seems to have performed much missionary work, in preaching the gospel, and organizing churches in “the regions of Syria and Cilicia” (Gal. i. 21). The believers thus gathered into the one true fold, he afterwards greets in an apostolical letter, dated at Jerusalem, addressing them as the brethren “in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia” (Acts xv. 23-41), and, again, we are told, fifteen years later (A. D. 52), that “he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (Acts xv. 41).

Although the larger number of Christians can only

admire the apostle's devotion and holy zeal, in these grand missionary operations, there was another duty which he discharged at Tarsus, in which all of us may follow his example. I refer to his successful efforts to convert his own near kindred to the faith of Christ. This may be regarded as an established fact, since one who showed himself so thoroughly awake to his obligations of every sort, would not lose sight of those which came much nearer home. His sister, and his nephew, and other kinsmen, lived in Tarsus, and for their spiritual welfare, he would constantly strive and pray (Rom. xvi. 21).

It is not unlikely that St. Paul found the period of his sojourn in his native city, the most difficult portion of his ministry. To be useful to one's own immediate relatives and friends, is often the hardest and most delicate task which the Christian is called upon to perform.

When St. Paul had been thus occupied at Tarsus, and the extensive regions round about, for three years, he was unexpectedly called upon by Barnabas, who had shown him such marked kindness, when he was a stranger, and a suspected person, at Jerusalem. Barnabas had been preaching at Antioch, where God had made him the instrument of accomplishing great good, but the zealous laborer felt that he needed a wiser head to help him carry on the work with success. "Now there was an opportunity afforded to these winners of souls to make great gain. Not about this work and this treasure did Saul and Barnabas fall out. They agreed to share the labor and the reward; it was about another and a smaller thing that they afterwards quarrelled in a moment of unwatchfulness" (Arnot).

St. Paul recognized the invitation from Barnabas, as a direct call from God, and he prepared to set off, at once, for the Syrian capital. For the first two centuries of the Christian era, Antioch was, what Constantinople afterwards became, "the Gate of the East." Hence, the importance of making it a grand centre of missionary work.

Antioch is a name dear to every follower of the Lord Jesus, because there, His people, as a term of reproach, were first called Christians (Acts xi. 26).

"Old Antioch shall answer ye
What title I would claim!
Old Antioch—whence Christian men
Confess their Christian name.
I wear no other name but Christ's,
And His is name enow,—
Writ by our mother's spousal hand
On all her children's brow.

"I know that many martyrs died
At rack and cruel stake,
And Cranmer laid his prelate hand
On fire, for Jesus' sake;
And many a bishop's burning heart,
Like flame was lost in flame;
But Christ,—none other died for me;
I'll wear no other name."

(COXE'S BALLADS.)

The apostles Paul and Barnabas spent "a whole year" in Antioch (Acts xi. 26) preaching in the synagogues, and teaching from house to house. In the midst of these engrossing labors, several prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and one of them, Agabus by name;

foretold that a time of famine was approaching; a famine which was severely felt in many provinces, and especially in Judea.

The Gentile converts to the Christian religion, recognizing the fact that they were now one in faith and hope with the Jews who had become followers of Jesus, determined to raise a contribution and send it for the relief of their suffering brethren in the holy city. Paul and Barnabas were appointed to carry the acceptable gift. "From Jerusalem, and from Jews, came forth the spiritual things wherewith the Gentiles of Antioch were enriched; they only obey a law of the kingdom when they load the returning train with temporal gifts for Christian Jews in Jerusalem" (Arnot).

When Paul and Barnabas reached their destination, they found that a worse calamity than that of famine had fallen upon the Church. One apostle had just been beheaded, and another was in prison (Acts xii. 1-8).

Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod Antipater, who slaughtered the innocents of Bethlehem, and son of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John Baptist, as an act of popularity with the Jews, had begun a bloody persecution of the Church.

The wretched monarch soon died a dreadful death, by the blasting of divine vengeance, while "the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts xii. 24).

Paul and Barnabas having fulfilled the special purpose of their visit, returned to Antioch, taking John Mark (a nephew of Barnabas) with them, to assist in their rapidly growing work.

And now the great apostle of the Gentiles, enters upon those grand missionary enterprises which rendered

his career so illustrious; long and perilous journeys, which carried him even to Spain and Britain.

The first foreign mission in which he engaged was that to the island of Cyprus. The Church at Antioch was wise, and instead of sending to this new field, untried men, or men who had been failures at home, they sent their very best. Paul and Barnabas were to be the missionaries. The young man, John Mark, could have gone, but it was felt to be important that the Church should be well represented from the first.

Does not this fact convey a striking suggestion to the Church in all after-time, that the bishops should be the chief missionaries, going beforehand to explore the land, select the most available points for setting up the standard of the cross, and then appointing priests and deacons to their respective posts?

Landing at Salamis, on the eastern side of Cyprus, the missionaries lost no time in crossing the island to Paphos, the home of Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor, a town noted for its wickedness, even in that licentious age.

This pagan ruler had about his little court an artful sorcerer who called himself Elymas, "the wise," and this unprincipled mountebank practiced on the credulity of his victim, and fed sumptuously at his cost.

As soon as the Roman governor heard of the arrival of the Christian missionaries, his curiosity was aroused, and he invited them to explain their peculiar doctrines to him. He was unsettled and miserable, and craved for light.

The sorcerer, fearing that his malign influence would be destroyed, did all he could to prevent the governor from listening to the missionaries of Christ.

St. Paul boldly rebuked him to his face, denouncing him as a "child of the devil," the father of lies, when, suddenly, the sight of the Elymas began to waver, and then he became stone blind. The shutting up of the sorcerer's eyes, opened those of the Roman deputy. We read, as a direct effect of the miracle, that when Sergius Paulus saw what was done, he believed, "being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (Acts xiii. 12).

He could now bless the gracious ordering of God's providence, which had brought him within sound of the gospel. Cyprus was such an insignificant province among the vast possessions of imperial Rome, that Sergius Paulus may have been disappointed and mortified, that no more conspicuous place had been given him. Now, however, he need envy nobody. Had he been governor of some greater province, he might have been left in pagan darkness, and never rejoiced in the glorious liberty of God's children.

The Roman governor is spoken of in the text as "*A prudent man.*"

In a worldly point of view, nothing could be considered more imprudent, than for a prominent man, in a pagan empire, to recognize the claims of the prophet of Galilee, who had so lately been crucified at Jerusalem. Sergius Paulus ran the risk of losing, not only his office, but his life, and yet the Divine record describes him as "*A prudent man.*"

The cunning, artful man is not prudent, neither is he always prudent who is most successful in the pursuit of worldly gain.

Prudence is discovered in the preference which it gives to every object according to its relative value. And what

better evidence can we have of it, than the choice of an everlasting portion in heaven, instead of being content with the short-lived pleasures of sin?

How fearfully, in the great day of account, will the Holy Spirit of God, vindicate this use of the term, when all other wisdom shall be proved to have been folly, and all other prudence insanity, except that which leads men to seek diligently for the pearl of great price, and when they have found it, to sell all that they have to purchase it!

Are you acting the part of "*a prudent man*," in God's sight?

Alas! in how many hundred ways has this point been brought home to the conscience of some thoughtless worldling, who is hardening his heart against it now! One can almost hear his imprudent resolution to delay, although he does not put it into words.

"Hereafter! yes, the preacher said, 'Hereafter'—

I would forget,
But strangely, 'mid the mirth and jest and laughter,
Creeps vague regret,
And then the word that haunts me even yet.

"Well, others face it—coward heart, be braver—

Come, eat and drink—
Hereafter—'tis a shadow; wherefore waver
And quail and shrink?
If it be more—we will not pause to think."

So, madly argues the imprudent man within himself.
So, argues every one of you, who has not chosen God as his portion.

A railway passenger observed three persons in the

same car with himself, in three very different conditions. The first was a maniac, guarded by his keepers, who was on his way to an asylum, perhaps to spend weary years. Another was a culprit, in chains, on whom the iron hand of justice had seized. The third, was a bride, gay and joyous, speeding onward to her new home, where a warm welcome awaited her.

Thus are we all flying towards eternity; some, the veriest madness, because they neglect to care for their souls; some, condemned culprits, for grievous violations of Divine law; and some, prepared for a Father's welcome to the heavenly city. We all belong to one of these classes. Which one?

SERMON XLIX.

HEARING THE WORD WITH GLADNESS.

(Sixth Sunday after Trinity.)

“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.”—ACTS xiii., part of 48th verse.

ST. PAUL was at Perga, in Pamphylia, a province of Asia Minor, Barnabas being the companion of his wanderings.

John Mark had left them, and gone back to Jerusalem. The Lord's great work had begun, and none could let nor hinder it. The people who, for so many ages, had sat in darkness, were to be gladdened by the glorious light of the gospel.

Leaving Perga, on the coast, the two apostles made their way to Antioch in Pisidia; a far less important city than that from which they had set out. In this journey, they encountered many dangers, from the lawless brigands who infested the mountainous region through which they were obliged to pass (II Cor. xi. 26).

On the first Sabbath after reaching Antioch, they went to the synagogue, and quietly seated themselves among the worshippers. When the regular liturgical service had been gone through with, the ruler of the synagogue, who had observed the presence of the strangers, sent and invited them to address the assembly, in case they

had any words of comfort or instruction for their fellow Israelites.

St. Paul was the spokesman, and having taken the usual place occupied by the speaker, he gracefully waved his hand, as a token for silent attention, and began his discourse.

With admirable tact and judgment, he dwelt upon the topic most grateful to Jewish ears; the peculiar favors which God had shown to their nation; and, then, very naturally branched off upon the promises which had been made to them concerning the long-expected Messiah. After this introduction, he showed most clearly how all these promises had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

This unexpected address produced a thrilling effect upon the people, and as they poured out of the synagogue, at the close of the service, many of them crowded about the eloquent speaker, and begged that he would favor them again, on the next occasion of their assembling together. Some of these earnest inquirers were Jews, but most were Gentiles. "Pleasant excitement it must have been to these fishers for men when they felt many grasping and drawing. Fuller explanation was given in private to all the inquirers, and a promise made, in answer to their eager request, that the same doctrines would be taught in the synagogue next Sabbath day. Those men of Antioch who remained after the sermon to converse with the ministers, would have many thoughts and conversations on the subject during the week. When they came up to the house of God next Sabbath, they were sure of the blessing; for the finding is, in the Lord's promise, made sure to those who seek" (Arnot).

It provoked the ill-will of the Jews to see the Gentiles flocking to the synagogue, as they had no idea of sharing their religious privileges with any outside of their own nation. When they heard that the Messiah was "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as to be "the glory of His people Israel," their indignation knew no bounds. Contradicting and blaspheming, they stirred up an uproar, and opposed the apostles with the bitterest hostility.

To the Gentiles of Antioch, the preaching of St. Paul was strange, but joyful tidings, and we are told, in the text, that "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord."

While one class of people thus rejected the message of salvation, and the other welcomed it with delight, the apostles felt that their duty was plain, and in the midst of the wild scene of excitement, they boldly said: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (46th v.). This rejection of the gospel by the Jews, did not defeat the plans of God. The apostles were, indeed, banished from the synagogue, but a multitude of converts, both Jews and Gentiles, were gathered into the Christian Church, and the knowledge of the truth was marvellously spread abroad.

The course which Paul and Barnabas pursued at Antioch, is one which all faithful ministers of Christ are accustomed to follow. They preach the word with all sincerity and earnestness. They visit from house to house, not for tea-drinking and dining, but in their official capacity as the Lord's servants. Upon special occasions, such as an approaching Confirmation, the most unex-

ceptionable mode is chosen, for bringing the subject of religion before individuals who have been attendants upon public worship. Sometimes the minister calls upon them, quietly and unobtrusively, and speaks as friend with friend. Sometimes a book or tract is sent. Sometimes a friendly letter of counsel is written. All these methods have but one purpose in view, that of bringing the wanderer home to Christ.

When these offers, on the part of the minister, are met in a cold spirit of reserve; when a plain reluctance is manifested to converse on such topics; when all honest efforts for good are treated with cool indifference, the minister of the Lord Jesus desists from the attempt. He does not rise up in the sanctuary, and proclaim aloud that he has abandoned the hopeless task, but he does give it up in despair; and, so far as such persons are concerned, he only remembers them afterwards in his prayers.

The enraged Jews of Antioch were not content with driving the apostles from the synagogue, but they annoyed and persecuted them to the utmost of their power. What they could not accomplish by calumny and violence, they effected in a more quiet way.

How often we observe the wonderful power of women for good or evil! The crafty Jews availed themselves of this, and contrived, through the influence of the female proselytes at Antioch, to win over to their side some women of high social position, who, in turn, were made the instruments for warping the judgment of the magistrates. This was a very indirect course, but none the less successful. The persecution against Paul and Barnabas became so furious, that prudence warned them to make good their escape.

The fact that woman possesses this power should be reason enough why she should be taught to use it well. Jesus Himself employed the tenderness, the patience, the perseverance of women, in His own cause, while He lived upon earth, and He employs it now. Let a few devoted daughters of the Church band themselves together, in any holy enterprise, and they are certain, by God's help to make it a success.

Paul and Barnabas departed from Antioch, but, according to the command of Jesus (St. Matt. x. 14), before they left the city, "they shook off the dust of their feet," an emblematic act, showing that God would, in like manner, reject those who treat His ministering servants with contempt. "On the last day that dust will speak. When the opposer's mouth is forever silenced; when the gainsayer, who has ridiculed the word, and the ministers, and the people of the Lord, has not another argument, another sarcasm, another scoff to offer, that dust will speak! 'He that heareth you' (says our blessed Saviour to His ministers), 'heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me'" (Blunt).

While Paul and Barnabas pursued their way across the bare uplands, separating Antioch from the plain of Iconium, the faithful disciples whom they had left behind, were filled with joy, even in the midst of trials and persecution.

The same scenes which took place at Antioch, were re-enacted at Iconium. The apostles went first to the synagogue, and by the force and power of their teachings, many, both of Jews and Greeks, were converted to the Christian faith.

Although a fierce opposition was aroused, Paul and Barnabas resolutely stood their ground, and kept on patiently with their work. Since that day, God has never failed to have devoted souls to spread abroad the honor of His name.

The visitor to Paris, while passing along one of its busiest streets, the Rue de Bac, may turn aside into a quiet court-yard, over which is the simple inscription, "Missions Etrangères," an establishment where, within ear-shot of all the discordant sounds of the gay metropolis, brave young men are trained for doing true and laudable service for God. One by one they go forth from the old college walls to return no more, and some day the tidings will come to those that are left behind, that these noble brothers of the faith, have, in heathen lands beyond the sea, laid down their lives for Christ.

"I had the happiness once (says a stranger from another land) of witnessing the departure of six newly-ordained missionaries. There was a solemn benediction in the little chapel, and an appropriate sermon, and then the young men sat on the altar, and priests and students came up and kissed reverently the feet that had elected to walk through thorny ways, on every step of which sudden and violent death would lie in wait. All the time the choir kept chanting, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things.' Friends, mothers, and sisters were there, weeping tears half sorrowful, but wholly happy. When all was done, these six young men walked straight from the altar, with the kisses warm on their feet, and uttering not a syllable of earthly farewell to any earthly friend . . . and were seen no

more; indeed, never to be seen again in the flesh till the great day when all shall be seen" (Rev. Joseph Farrell).

We have wandered far from Paul and Barnabas, but not beyond the influence of that spirit of self-sacrifice which nerved them for their labors.

May it be said of you, as of the Gentiles of Pisidian Antioch, when they heard the gospel preached, "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord."

It was indeed good news, to be told what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for them, and they praised and extolled the glorious word. The same gospel is preached to you. Have you received it in its fulness and its power, and has it brought gladness to your hearts? If you have not embraced the gospel, you ought to ask yourself most seriously why you have neglected so great salvation. "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (I John v. 11). The condition of your being saved, is that you believe the record. If you do not believe the record, there is no hope for you.

A poor man receives a letter from a foreign country, saying that a distant relative has died, and left him a fortune. After a while another letter comes from the cashier of a bank in his own neighborhood, stating that he has received the money on deposit for him, and that he holds it subject to his order. The poor man shakes his head, and mutters to himself, "It must be all a dream. I don't believe that any rich relative died, and left me money!"

In other words, he does not believe the record, and he dies poor. He deserved it. So must all die, poor, helpless, and hopeless, if they will not believe the precious record which God gave of His Son.

SERMON L.

TRIBULATION THE PASSPORT TO THE KINGDOM.

(Seventh Sunday after Trinity.)

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."—ACTS
xiv., part of 22d verse.

"I AM an heir to the cross as well as the kingdom," said St. Bernard. "O what does not God give to man in mercy," asks St. Augustine, "when tribulation itself is sent to him as a blessing?"

The apostles, Paul and Barnabas, having been driven by fierce persecution from Iconium, went next to Lystra, a city of Lycaonia, not far from the former place.

From the fact that no mention is made of a synagogue in this town, we may conclude that few Israelites lived there, and that it was one of the strongholds of pagan idolatry.

Lystra was believed to be under the special protection of Jupiter, and the ancients thought that the gods occasionally visited the earth in the form of men. The apostles had gathered a multitude of people about them, whom they were addressing in some place of public resort, when St. Paul's attention was attracted by a poor cripple whose whole soul seemed wrapped up in the preacher's stirring words. The apostle's penetrating glance enabled him to discover that the lame man "had faith to be healed," and

he cried with a loud voice, to the amazement of the idolaters, "Stand upright on thy feet!"

Obedient to the summons, the cripple sprang to his feet, in the consciousness of a power which he had never known before. Forthwith a tumult of voices arose from the astonished crowd, and the Lycaonians bethought them of the old tradition of their fathers, and they exclaimed with one accord: "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" They fancied that Paul, the powerful and persuasive speaker, must be Mercury, and his companion Barnabas, whose majestic appearance, softened by benignity had completely won their regard, could be no less than Jupiter.

"Men have been ever cherishing the conviction of a real fellowship between earth and heaven, and that not merely an outward one, but an inward; a conviction that the two worlds truly met, not by external contact only, but in the depths of personal life, in persons that most really belonged and held on to both worlds. No sooner did those men of Lystra see in Paul and Barnabas beneficent healing presences, with power to chase away the sicknesses of men than at once they leaped to the conclusion: 'The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men,' and could hardly be restrained from offering them divine honors" (Trench's "Hulsean Lectures").

Before going on with the narrative, I can not forbear pointing out to you the affecting picture which we may discover in the lame man at Lystra, of our own wretched state by nature. Is not every sinner, thus weak and helpless in God's sight? unable of his own power to "run the way of His commandments"?

Have you faith to be healed as that cripple had? Do

you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and soul and mind and strength? If so, then He will heal your infirmities, and He will love you freely. Like the cripple at Lystra you shall have strength given to stand upright on your feet.

The whole population of that town was in an uproar. No time was to be lost in paying due honor to these supposed visitants from heaven. The priest of Jupiter who ministered in the temple before the city gates, was summoned; and oxen and garlands of flowers were carried in procession by the excited people to the house where the apostles abode.

Hearing the approach of the multitude, and having learned the occasion of this unusual excitement, Paul and Barnabas were seized with holy horror, and rent their clothes, and rushed out of the house beseeching the people to desist from carrying out their idolatrous purpose. The crowd stood in dumb amazement, and even the energetic disavowal of the apostles that they laid any claim to divinity, hardly satisfied them of their mistake. With reluctant steps the idolaters retired, leading back the victims which they had intended to sacrifice to the two strangers.

We might have supposed that the people who had been so ready to pay divine honors to these humble men, when they supposed them to be gods, would at least have treated them kindly, when they proved themselves to be good and honest. The Lycaonians, however, were proverbially faithless and fickle, and being mortified and provoked at the ridiculous mistake they had made, they were prepared to hate and persecute them. Their bitterness was further increased by the persevering efforts of

certain Jews, who dogged the steps of the apostles from Iconium and Antioch (Acts xiv. 19).

It is more than likely that they persuaded the people of Lystra, that the lame man had been healed by some diabolical magic, and that those who practiced such black arts, ought to be banished from the city.

The cunning insinuations of these implacable Jews, produced the desired effect, and an immediate change was brought about in public sentiment. St. Paul was mercilessly stoned, and having been dragged through the city gate, he was cast outside the walls, under the impression that he was dead.

"Once was I stoned," wrote St. Paul, to the Corinthians (II Epis. xi. 25), eight years afterwards, when the murderous assault was yet fresh in his memory.

"What a crowd of memories must have rushed up, when he felt his spirit swooning away under the stone shower! This would seem the echo of his own dread act. Stephen's heroic death must have left its mark deep on the heart of the converted Paul. Perhaps, when he felt what he believed to be the sleep of death creeping over his senses, he expected that at his next awakening he would find himself in Stephen's company" (Arnot).

The enraged Lycaonians were mistaken in their expectation that they had made an end of St. Paul; for while the sorrowing disciples crowded about the apparently lifeless body, the apostle gradually recovered from the effects of the stunning blow, and "rose up," and returned to the city.

Among those who showed sympathy for St. Paul, during this trying time at Lystra, we may venture to say there was a young man, who was afterwards to become

distinguished in the Church. This was Timothy. Two years later, when the apostle visited Lystra again, he found this young man living there, and highly esteemed by the little company of Christians (Acts xvi. 1). Six years afterwards he writes to Timothy (I Epis. i. 2), calling him his "own son in the faith"; from which, it is evident, that this young man was one of those who had been converted to Christianity during the apostle's first visit.

St. Paul might have gone away, lamenting that he had been able to accomplish so little, and yet, the good seed had found a lodgement in this young heart, and the harvest would follow.

The apostles proceeded eastward, from Lystra, through the interior of Asia Minor; Derbe being the extreme limit of their journey in that direction. Here they met with a warm reception, and the preaching of the gospel was followed by the conversion of "many disciples" (xiv. 21). From Derbe, St. Paul began to retrace his steps, revisiting Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where he had before suffered so much for his Master's sake.

In each of these places there were disciples to be instructed and encouraged, and to each and all of them, the painful side of the picture must be fairly presented, that: "*We must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.*"

These words of the text may seem very strange to be chosen to convey consolation, and yet they do abound with comfort for all of God's afflicted people. The consolation which they contain does not consist in our being told that there are afflictions which must be borne, but in the gracious assurance that these afflictions shall minister to our eternal good.

We may easily conceive of the condition of one who has been bereft of property, and health, and kindred, and friends; who has drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs, but whose future lot would not be in the least improved thereby. And why? Simply because these sorrows have not led him to humble himself before God; because he has given way to useless repinings; or hardened his heart in stoical indifference, instead of regarding them as loving corrections from that gracious Father's hand, who does not, without a wise purpose, afflict His children.

"It would seem to be a great hardship to a lump of iron ore, if it were conscious, that it should have to be melted, separated from its accretions, beaten together into a bar of pure metal, then heated again and cooled suddenly, exposed in this way in quick succession to the most rapid and intense changes of temperature, and hammered furiously while these terrible processes are going on. 'Why can not I be left in peace,' it might say, 'in my condition as ore? I am contented with that form of life.' Yet it is only by such processes that it can be promoted in quality from the sluggish state of raw metal, compounded with alloy, to steel" (Starr King).

You see how this illustrates the good which even very grievous afflictions accomplish for such as patiently suffer them.

"Is not the way to heavenly gain
Through earthly grief and loss?
Rest must be won by toil and pain—
The crown repays the cross.
As woods when shaken by the breeze,
Take deeper, firmer root,
As winter's frosts but make the trees
Abound in summer fruit;

So every heaven-sent pang and throe,
 That Christian firmness tries,
 But nerves us for our work below,
 And forms us for the skies."

(HENRY FRANCIS LYTE.)

So long as our Heavenly Father sees it to be good for us, He will shed brightness about our path; but let us not murmur, nor doubt His loving kindness, when He gives us "the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction" (Is. xxx. 20). It was Barnabas, the son of consolation, who spoke the words, that "*We must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.*"

The life of a Christian upon earth, is like a tempestuous voyage on the ocean. The waves are threatening; the courage fails, and the land is far distant. Still, the storm-tossed one has confidence in the ship, and in the skill and watchfulness of the captain, and he firmly believes that he shall reach the desired haven.

So, too, the child of God, who is borne in the Ark of Christ's Church, over the waves of this troublesome world, is comforted by the glorious hope, that when the tribulation has been safely passed, he will find himself, rejoicing and happy, in the land of everlasting life.

Our adorable Redeemer "learned obedience by the things that He suffered," and "was made perfect by sufferings," and we, also, must be content to "suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together" (I Pet. ii. 21; Rom. viii. 17-29).

To be "patient in tribulation," is one of the rules which St. Paul lays down for those who would walk acceptably with God (Romans xii. 12).

It is a noteworthy tribute paid to the glorious com-

pany of martyrs, enumerated in the epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 35): "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance."

Alas! how many, in these easy-going days, are ready to accept deliverance,—deliverance even of the most questionable kind, if it promise even temporary exemption from inconvenience and suffering!

St. Francis de Sales said many pithy, suggestive things, but none more pithy and suggestive than this: "The less there is of our particular interest in the pursuit of virtues, the more brightly shines our love to God, and the more pure it is. A child easily kisses his mother, when she gives him sugar; but it is a sign of greater love, if he kiss her after she has given him wormwood."

SERMON LI.

INTOLERANCE.

(Eighth Sunday after Trinity.)

“The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.”—ACTS xv. 39.

CAN these be the two holy men whom we saw at Lystra, refusing divine honors from the priest of Jupiter?

They are indeed the same, and they told nothing but the simple truth, when they assured the astonished idolaters that they were no more than mortal men, of like passions with others.

We shall come to this presently, in the due order of the narrative.

The course of St. Paul has been traced through his first apostolical journey, and we find him once more at Antioch, seeking much needed repose among his Christian friends.

Soon after the return of Paul and Barnabas to that city, the members of the Church met together, and the two missionary bishops gave them an interesting account of their labors, and (what to Jewish ears, was a delicate subject to dwell upon) they told how God “had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts xiv. 27.)

It was stated, just now, that the apostles sought repose at Antioch, but it proved to be of short duration.

Trouble was brewing they little dreamed of, which was to be the occasion of much painful dissension in the Church.

The whole face of the Roman Empire through which the apostles had journeyed, preaching "the gospel of the kingdom," was covered over with the scattered sons of Israel, many of whom had become Christians. Although they thus formally abandoned the Jewish faith, their early prejudices inclined them to hold fast to many features of the ceremonial law, and they wished to oblige all Christians to fall in with their peculiar views.

The argument which they urged was certainly very plausible, and nobody could deny that circumcision was of divine appointment, and that under the old dispensation, it could not be neglected with impunity. Moreover, they insisted that this Jewish rite had not been abolished by any positive command, since the establishment of the Christian religion. On these grounds it was that the Jewish converts were so strenuous in their demand that all Gentiles who became Christians, should submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision. They were not satisfied with recommending that the Gentile converts should quietly yield this point, but they made it a question of life and death, declaring in so many words, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved."

The smouldering feeling of discontent which had been cherished by the Jewish converts towards the Gentiles, who, like themselves, had become converts to the Christian religion, burst forth into a flame. It was at Jerusalem, the metropolis of the Jewish world, that a bold and decided stand was taken, in regard to this disputed point. Accordingly, when Paul and Barnabas had returned to

Antioch, certain "false brethren" (so St. Paul describes these Christians who still clung to their Jewish prejudices) followed them there, to act as spies upon them, and to discover how far the Jewish customs had been relaxed by the Christians of Antioch.

These "false brethren" pursued an underhand and dishonorable course, and did their best to sow the seeds of division among their friends in that city.

From his previous history we know full well that St. Paul was as ready as any one to go to the extreme verge of charitable concession, when no great principle must be sacrificed, but in an emergency like the present, he was as immovable as a rock.

His discriminating mind did not fail to discover the secret poison which would spread through the minds of Christians, should this unreasonable doctrine be tolerated, and he accordingly opposed it with all his masterly ability. He saw how this attempt to exalt ceremonial observances would have a tendency to tarnish the glory of the one great and all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, which Jesus had offered upon the cross, and, therefore, having argued the matter with the brethren at Antioch, to no purpose, he set out with Barnabas and others to submit the whole question to a council of the apostles at Jerusalem.

This old heresy of the Judaizing teachers still keeps a foothold in the world; not in the same form, it is true, but the essence remains unchanged.

There has always been a disposition in the human heart to offer some merits or deservings of its own in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, as an atonement for sin.

A ship bound for Australia sprung a leak in a storm.

There was a very nervous, excitable man aboard, who, the captain feared, would create a panic among his fellow-passengers. When this man came to the captain, in great alarm to ask whether the danger was not extremely imminent, the officer confirmed his fears, but requested him to keep quiet about it, and to help save the ship by holding a rope until he should be told to let go of it. He, accordingly, stood firmly at the post assigned him, until the storm was over and all was once more quiet. The nervous man fondly conceived that the captain would thank him publicly, before all the passengers, for saving the ship, and, indeed, he hinted as much to the astonished officer. He was greatly amazed and mortified, when the captain answered, "What, sir, do you think you saved the ship? I only gave you the rope, to keep your mind occupied, and to hinder you from doing harm!"

Thus do short-sighted mortals over-estimate their own works. The Lord Jesus Christ does not need the help of any of us, in the accomplishment of His task of saving a lost world. We can neither save ourselves nor purchase heaven by our merits. They who fancy that they can do it are as much deceived as was the nervous man on board the ship. While every true believer will bring forth the fruit of good works, to the glory of God's name, and such good works will always be manifested where the heart is right, yet the great cardinal doctrine of the gospel remains as before: Christ Jesus, and He alone, "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. i. 30).

We now rejoin the company of travellers, whom we left on their journey from Antioch to the holy city. Besides Paul and Barnabas, it appears from St. Paul's letter

to the Galatians (i. 5), written six years later, that Titus was with them; a convert from heathenism, an uncircumcised Greek,—who was one of the deputies sent to refer the important question which agitated the Church, to the mother Church at Jerusalem.

Fifteen years had passed, since Saul of Tarsus had gone forth, on his fanatical crusade, to persecute and destroy the Christians of Damascus; and although he had twice been at Jerusalem since then, both visits had been hurried, and beset with danger.

When the deputies reached the holy city, the general interest in their work among the heathen was so great, that the dispute on a point of doctrine was, for a while, lost sight of, until public curiosity was satisfied. Meanwhile, St. Paul held private interviews with the more influential members of the Church, especially with the apostles Peter, James, and John (Gal. ii. 9).

When all things were arranged, the first great council of the Christian Church assembled, and St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, presided over its deliberations. The chief speakers were the apostles Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, the final decision being given by St. James.

I need only remark, that St. Peter did not put on any of the lofty airs of that creature of later ages,—the pope. He spoke as one equal with his brethren in the apostolic office, Paul and Barnabas, while St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem, was the presiding officer, as we have already seen.

The decree enacted by this first council, breathed the spirit of charity and mutual forbearance. It was sent forth in the name of the apostles, presbyters, and brethren, to their Gentile brethren of Antioch, Syria, and

Cilicia, —strongly commending to them their beloved brethren, Barnabas and Paul, men who had hazarded their lives for the gospel; and declaring that no Jewish obligation need rest upon them, except only to abstain from the feasts and licentiousness of the heathen temples.

The Christians of Antioch welcomed the two apostles with joy and thankfulness, and in the presence of the assembled Church, the important decree was read.

Much pains were taken that the foundations of the Church should be firmly established in this important city, that it might serve as a basis for carrying the work of the gospel into Europe. The burning zeal of the great missionary bishop—as St. Paul may well be called—could not be long pent up within narrow limits, and he soon proposed to Barnabas that they should revisit the churches which they had planted in western Asia. Barnabas readily consented, but an unpleasant difficulty arose, in regard to the choice of the assistant who should accompany them.

With the natural weakness so common in the world, Barnabas made choice of his own nephew, John Mark; to which St. Paul stoutly objected: "We have already tried the pluck of this young man, and he was found wanting. Have you forgotten how he left us in the lurch, during our first missionary journey, and returned to his mother's comfortable home in Jerusalem?"

"It is very hard," Barnabas would argue, in reply, "to condemn a young man for one failure. St. Peter failed far more shamefully, and yet that did not hinder his Lord's renewed commission: 'Feed My sheep.' 'Feed My lambs.'"

Both these good men were right, and both were wrong.

The contention waxed sharper and hotter; the old friends parted, and each went his way. And so St. Luke wrote down in his history, in an honest, straightforward way: "*The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.*"

He was well aware that scoffing men would be ready with their taunts, and say: "Fine specimens of Christian bishops, surely, preaching love and forgiveness to others, and yet quarrelling among themselves!" All this St. Luke could anticipate; but he was writing a true history, and so he described the painful quarrel as it was. Could any better evidence be asked for, to prove what a reliable book the Bible is?

That John Mark really deserved the kindness and confidence of his uncle Barnabas, we can not doubt. In after years, St. Paul himself found in this young man a faithful and active adherent. He mentions him, more than once, in his letters (II Tim. iv. 11; Philemon 24th v.). Indeed, in the last lines he ever wrote, St. Paul says to Timothy, as if anxious to make amends for the old wrong: "Bring Mark with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (Colossians iv. 11).

The Divine Head of the Church made even the wrath of His own chosen servants to praise Him, and to help forward the work of the kingdom. Barnabas, with his nephew Mark as his companion, went by sea to Cyprus; while St. Paul, attended by Silas, travelled overland westward through Syria and Cilicia. Thus, the broad stream of missionary labor was divided, and double the surface of country was fertilized thereby.

Human nature is so constituted, that we can not all agree on every point, and he is the wisest man, who

schools himself to hear his own pet notions opposed and found fault with, without becoming angry and intolerant.

That good old man certainly had the spirit of his Divine Master, who said to his brethren, in the midst of a bitter controversy: "Let us agree as far as we can; and where we can not agree, in God's name let us agree to differ!"

SERMON LII.

THE HEART OPENED.

(Ninth Sunday after Trinity.)

“Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul.”—ACTS xvi., part of 14th verse.

THE second missionary journey of the great apostle of the Gentiles was even more eventful than the first.

His intention was to visit the various churches which he had planted, that he might afford them the instruction and encouragement which they would be sure to need.

Attended by Silas, as his travelling companion, and followed by the prayers and good wishes of the Christians of Antioch, the two brave standard bearers of the cross went forth. Passing along the great Roman road across the plain of Cilicia, and halting (no doubt) for a brief space, at Tarsus, they made their way over Mount Taurus, into the high plain of Derbe and Lystra.

We can fancy St. Paul pointing out to his companion, the temple of Jupiter, outside the gate of Lystra, and telling him of the exciting scene when the idolatrous people had mistaken Barnabas and himself for heathen deities, and of their indignant rage, when they were undeceived. Here he had suffered more than elsewhere, for the cause of his Divine Lord, and here his heart was to be made glad, by a signal token of God's favor.

At Lystra, the ministry gained a new recruit in the person of Timothy. From his earliest years, this devout youth had been carefully instructed in the Holy Scriptures, by his mother and grandmother; although his father was an unbelieving Greek. The unfeigned faith of the two godly women, and the preaching of St. Paul, had been blessed by God's Spirit, and Timothy had thus been led to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah.

The apostle's heart was drawn to this young convert with peculiar tenderness, and he wished him to go with him, as a helper, on the great missionary journey which he had so auspiciously begun. There was a difficulty in the way, which must first be removed. Although Timothy's mother was a Jewess, his father being a Greek, had probably objected to their son's being made a member of the Jewish church, by circumcision, just as children are now, too often, kept back from Holy Baptism, by the opposition of an irreligious father or mother.

How, then, could St. Paul choose for his travelling companion, in carrying the gospel to prejudiced Jews, a young man who would everywhere be regarded by them as a mere heathen, because the ceremonial rite of the Mosaic law had been neglected? It is true, the apostle had in his travelling bag, full warrant for declining to bind circumcision on the conscience of the Gentile converts, in the parchments containing the decrees of the recent council of Jerusalem. "He had contended earnestly and successfully for the liberty of Christians; but he was not the man to put all his rights in force, without regard to circumstances. He delighted to concede in tenderness to brethren that which he would

not surrender to the legalists who demanded it as of right. He refused to circumcise the Greek Titus at the demand of Jewish Christians, because they demanded it on the ground that it was necessary to salvation; but Timothy, by the mother's side and by education a Jew, he readily circumcised, in order to smooth his way into the synagogues, and enlarge his opportunities of preaching Christ" (Arnot).

It is probable that Timothy was ordained at Lystra, and, from this place, the three Christian missionaries, following the Roman military road, went through Phrygia, the largest province of Asia Minor, and an extensive region on the east, which had been settled by several tribes of Gauls, and hence called Galatia. "Detained by sickness (Gal. iv. 13), possibly in Ancyra, their capital, Paul preached Christ to them. There was nothing they would not do for him. They would have 'plucked out their eyes and given them' to him. From Galatia they journeyed on towards the Ægæan Sea. From the high chalk downs of Mysia they saw the populous plain of the Asian province on their left, with its seven great cities destined one day to be known as the seven churches. Should they descend into those cities, and there preach the gospel? No; they were mysteriously hindered by the unseen hand that was guiding them" (Norris' "Key to the Acts").

Thus prevented from going to the northern provinces of Asia Minor, the missionaries soon reached Troas, the extreme western point of the continent. Here St. Paul was turning over in his mind what region it was God's will that he should visit next, when, in the visions of the night (Acts xvi. 9), a human form seemed to stand

before him, in which supernatural visitant he recognized "a man of Macedonia," who pleaded the spiritual destitution of his native land, saying, with importunate earnestness, "Come over and help us!"

Doubt and suspense were ended. It was the Lord's will that His chosen servants should cross over into Europe and there proclaim the glad tidings of redemption. A fourth missionary now joined the company; St. Luke the beloved physician. St. Paul's recent illness may have suggested the idea of this arrangement. St. Luke now becomes the historian, and from this point the narrative in the book of Acts proceeds in the first person plural. The beloved physician continued to attend St. Paul in all his future journeys and imprisonments (with one brief interval) until the end.

On the very morning after the vision had been seen—calling upon the apostle to cross over into Europe,—the four Christian missionaries might be seen threading their way among the busy crowd who thronged the landing at Troas, anxiously seeking a passage. A vessel was speedily found, and with a propitious wind they set sail. After a prosperous voyage of two days, the apostle and his companions landed at Neapolis, a Macedonian harbor, and then travelled ten miles inland to Philippi, a Roman colony. This was the first place where the gospel was preached in Europe.

From many a neglected place, in regions far and near, the Macedonian cry is heard even at this late day, from those destitute of gospel privileges, "Come over and help us!" Blessed are those servants of the Lord, who, like holy Paul, rise up in response to that appeal, and depart as the messengers of peace and salvation. Blessed are

they also, who, while discharging their duties at home, give freely according to their ability, that the heralds of the cross may not be hindered in their work.

Philippi (where we left the four Christian missionaries just now) was more of a military than a mercantile city, and the number of Jews was small. Not a single Christian was found there. St. Paul, however, soon learned that a little company of women who were believers in the God of Israel, were accustomed to assemble for prayer, "by the river side" at some distance from the city, where they might be free from the annoyances to be looked for in the midst of a pagan population.

Here again, we can not fail to notice the powerful influence which devoted women have always exerted upon the fortunes of the Christian Church. In the days of its weakness, their untiring energies were put forth to strengthen its cause; and in prosperous days it is devoted women who minister to the wants of the poor, instruct the young; and who, on every occasion of public worship, whether in cathedral, or in the log-chapel by the wayside, form the largest portion of the congregation.

It would seem that St. Paul and his companions had reached Philippi early in the week, and before the return of the Sabbath they had found out the place where the little company met for their devotions (the Prosencha, or Jewish oratory), and at the usual hour of prayer, went and joined them. Assuming the common attitude of teachers in those times, the apostle and his companions sat down and spoke to those who were assembled. Among the persons thus addressed was Lydia, a native of Thyatira, who had come to Philippi to carry on some business connected with the dyeing trade.

The "Turkey-red" dyers of Thyatira had their agents in various towns of Europe, for the sale of their popular manufactories, and probably the very ship which had brought the Christian missionaries to the western shores, had carried bales of purple cloth for the wealthy Roman citizens of Philippi. Lydia attended to this worldly business with the commendable diligence of one who had a family to provide for, but she did not neglect (even in a foreign land where no regular synagogue had been built) the worship of the God of Israel.

It is scarcely necessary to say what a door of usefulness is thus opened every day to Christians, under like circumstances, who, by acting as lay-readers, even for the smallest company of their neighbors, may be laying the foundations of a church. Probably up to this time nothing but the regular lessons and prayers had ever been heard at this little Jewish oratory by the riverside, and the simple sermon delivered by St. Paul was the first which had been preached there. We are told in the text that "the Lord opened the heart" of Lydia, and that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

This was no miraculous process. The woman gave her mind to the instructions of God's servant; she was persuaded of the importance of what he said, and immediately she acted upon the advice which she had received. Instead of saying: "I am too much occupied in my business just now, and will take time to think about this matter;" instead of putting off the care of her soul, as some of you are doing, immediately she was baptized (verse 16).

Nor was this all. She presented her "household" also for baptism; her children, her servants, and those who

aided her in her busy establishment. O that all to whom this gospel is preached would be as prompt and decided to act!

Lydia was anxious to show her appreciation of the spiritual benefits which she had received, and she urged St. Paul and his companions to abide at her house during their sojourn at Philippi.

The second convert to the gospel in Europe was also a woman, but one of humbler rank. A poor girl—a slave—who was a vagrant fortune-teller of the market-place, brought no small gain to her masters by the influence she exerted over the credulous people of Philippi. Her crazed utterances were so overruled by the Holy Spirit, that she loudly testified to the divine mission of the Christian strangers.

He whose word brought peace to the demoniac of Gadara, brought peace also to this poor Thracian girl.

Trouble grew out of this, of which more will be said hereafter.

All the good which came to Lydia, was the reward for having opened her heart to receive the truth. The great instrument which the Lord uses for bringing the disobedient to the wisdom of the just is the will. "If any man hear My voice," says the everlasting Redeemer, "and open the door (the fast-closed door of a hard and stubborn heart), I will come in to him" (Rev. iii. 20).

In obedience to His gracious words, will not the lagging and thoughtless sinner answer with thankful joy, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, come in?"

SERMON LIII.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

(Tenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

ACTS xvi. 31.

WHEN the poor Thracian girl, held as a slave by the company of speculators of Philippi, who made great gain out of her mad utterances, had been restored to her right mind by St. Paul, the greedy owners became enraged. A mob was soon gathered and a fierce assault made upon the strangers. Paul and Silas were rudely dragged before the prætors, who, not knowing their claim to Roman citizenship, were more than willing to listen to their accusers. The Jews had already been banished from Rome, and it was easy to persuade the people and the magistrates of Philippi to join in a persecution against the hated nation. The owners of the slave girl were, therefore, very careful to remind the prætors that these troublesome strangers were Jews and that they were seeking to propagate a form of religion not recognized by the Roman law. Paul and Silas were accordingly stripped, and delivered to the lictors to be beaten with rods. Many cruel stripes were inflicted by these practiced executioners before the infuriated mob was satisfied, and then, bleeding and faint, the two inoffensive mission-

aries were thrust into the damp underground cell of the dungeon, and their feet made fast in the stocks.

No wonder that St. Paul remembered all this years afterwards, and referred to it in one of his letters; "shamefully entreated at Philippi" (I Thess. ii. 2). The jailer had not been contented with confining the apostles with ordinary offenders, but had cast them into a loathsome dungeon, as if they had been the vilest malefactors. Marvellous are the ways of God. He had suffered them to be brought into darkness, that He might show forth His marvellous light. It was now midnight; the gloominess of the hour being rendered still more overpowering by the obscurity of the "inner prison." The darkness offered no obstacle to prayer, and the two persecuted men poured out their hearts to God. They not only prayed, but they sang; "sang praises unto God." The familiar words of the psalms which had comforted God's people of old, and which Christians still delight to use, afforded the most appropriate hymns of praise to Him "Who giveth songs in the night" (Job. xxxv. 10).

We may almost imagine that we hear the plaintive strains coming forth from the gloomy dungeon. "The Lord looketh down from His sanctuary; out of heaven the Lord beholdeth the earth; that he might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity, and deliver the children appointed unto death" (Ps. cii. 19, 20). "O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power, preserve Thou those that are appointed to die" (Ps. lxxix. 12, and Ps. cxlvi. 6-8). "The Lord helpeth them to right that suffer wrong; the Lord looseth men out of prison; the Lord careth for the righteous."

Such was the burden of the apostles' song at that still midnight hour.

God heard the prayers and the praise; aye, there were other listeners also. The historian adds: "the prisoners heard them" (v. 25). The motley company of good and bad who constitute the inmates of every prison, were startled by those songs of praise in the night season.

As the two blended voices rose on the midnight silence, the astonished prisoners would whisper, from cell to cell, that the singers were the two Jews who had been brought in, the evening before, bleeding from their severe punishment for having taught some new doctrine concerning the resurrection of the dead.

"Songs in the night are the special gift of God, and they are well fitted to arrest attention and impress their mark. A lamp when lighted may burn by day, but it is only at night that it is seen by the neighborhood. It is thus that consistent joy in the Lord, when believers attain it in time of trouble, becomes an effective testimony for Christ" (Arnot).

"Suddenly," even before the last accents of these praises had died away, in the dungeon at Philippi, the crash of the earthquake came, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, so that the doors were thrown open. The cruel jailer, who probably occupied some remote room apart, did not hear the singing, but he was aroused by the earthquake.

Seeing the prison doors wide open, and supposing, as a matter of course, that the prisoners had made their escape, he drew his sword to kill himself. He reasoned that suicide would be better than the disgrace of the punishment which the Romish law would inflict upon him.

"Philippi," remarks Conybeare, in his *Life of St. Paul*, "is famous in the annals of suicide. Here Cassius, unable to survive defeat, covered his face in the empty tent, and ordered his freedman to strike the blow. His messenger Titinius held it to be 'a Roman's part' to follow the stern example. Here Brutus bade adieu to his friends, exclaiming: 'Certainly we must fly, yet not with the feet, but with the hands;' and many, whose names have never reached us, ended their last struggle for the republic by self-inflicted death."

As suicide was the highest point to which heathen culture could rise, we are not surprised to find the terrified jailer disposed to try it. His hand was arrested by the voice of St. Paul, who shuddered at the thought of the dreadful deed, and shouted aloud, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."

Relieved by this announcement from his terrible anxiety, the jailer called for a light, and hastened to the "inner prison," where the apostles had been confined. We are told that he "sprang in, and came trembling." Now that his mind was at ease concerning the safety of the prisoners, why should he tremble? The power of God which had shaken the prison walls, and unbarred the doors, had subdued the jailer's stubborn heart. He fell down before his two ill-treated prisoners, as a supplicant for mercy. In the presence of his household, who had assembled in haste, at the report of these strange things, he cried out: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Tell me of that great God to whom your prayers and praises were addressed, and who wrought for you this wonderful deliverance. Tell me of Him, that I may appease His just displeasure, and deliver my soul."

St. Paul answered briefly and to the point. There was no time for a long discourse, and no occasion for nice theological distinctions. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*"

Here was the gospel in a nut-shell. Christ Jesus was the author and finisher of salvation, but He was to be approached through the use of appointed means. When the jailer had led the apostles to his house, and, as some atonement for his cruelty, had washed their bleeding wounds, he and his household were baptized.

The jailer's prisoners now became his guests: "He set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (v. 34).

All who really believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, will, as a matter of course, be baptized, as the jailer was. More than this, they will take care that their families, also, are made partakers of the Christian privileges which they themselves enjoy.

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts ii. 38, 39).

At last morning dawned, and the city magistrates having had time to form a more sober judgment in the case, sent word to the prison that the apostles should be set at liberty.

A grievous wrong had been done to Paul and Silas. They were Roman citizens. Two laws of the empire had been broken, in their rash and cruel punishment. They had been condemned, with no form of trial, and had been publicly beaten, in presence of a crowd of witnesses.

Accordingly, when the lictors brought the contemptuous message to the jailer, "Let those men go," St. Paul answered, with the spirit of a high-bred man, whose honor had been touched: "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."

As an individual, St. Paul was willing to put up with a good deal of ill treatment, but his character and influence belonged to Christ and the Church, and for this reason, he stood up boldly in defence of his violated rights.

The lictors went back to the magistrates with the unexpected and startling message, and when these pompous dignitaries heard it, they became greatly alarmed. The very people of Philippi who had encouraged them in their brutality the day before, would now be ready to turn against them. The magistrates forgot their dignity, and hurrying to the prison, apologized for their conduct as best they could, and entreated Paul and Silas to depart.

Thus, by a stroke of worldly wisdom, the apostles instead of making their escape, like runaway slaves, under cover of the earthquake, were led forth with honor, and the Christian religion assumed additional importance in the eyes of the people of Philippi.

With deliberate and dignified steps, they proceeded to the house of Lydia, where they gave their parting counsels to the Christian brethren who had met there to rejoice at their deliverance.

Hitherto, the whole body of believers at Philippi had consisted of the few devoted women, who assembled for worship by the riverside. Now, the apostles could report to them that the jailer and his whole family had

become Christians, a circumstance of no little importance, at such a crisis of affairs.

The little church thus organized, was left under the care of St. Timothy, and the Evangelist St. Luke, and Paul and Silas pushed onward, with good courage.

That St. Paul continued to feel a lively interest in the church at Philippi may be seen from the letter which he addressed to them, written from Rome, eleven years after the events just described.

There are few persons who have not, at some time, reasoned with themselves, after this manner:—"I have an immortal soul which must be saved or lost. I do not wish to lose it. How, then, can it be saved?"

The answer to this most important question is given in the text: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*"

If we believe ourselves to be born in sin, and inheritors of a corrupt nature, we shall gladly renounce all idea of being saved by our own merits. If we believe ourselves exposed to punishment on account of our wrong doings, we shall devoutly apply for an interest in the appointed ransom. If we believe ourselves to be unable to discharge any portion of the demands of a righteous law, we shall be ready to ascribe our deliverance to a free act of grace and mercy. If we believe that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, to Him, and to Him alone, shall we look for salvation.

While thus following the example of the jailer of Philippi, by confessing your belief in Christ, let no one neglect to follow his example also in the outward act of obedience, which proved the sincerity of his profession: "He was baptized, he, and all his, straightway."

SERMON LIV.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

(Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.)

“These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.”

ACTS xvii., part of 6th verse.

WE look in, for a few moments, on a crowded assembly of true-born Jews, gathered for religious worship in Thessalonica.

A Christian church was afterwards to be planted there, and St. Paul was to address to the members of it the valuable instructions now treasured up in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians.

On the particular Sabbath day, to which we have just referred, Paul and Silas made their appearance in the synagogue, and as soon as an opportunity was afforded him to speak, the great apostle of the Gentiles opened his commission. Having lately passed Stagirus, the birth-place of Aristotle, the able advocate of Christianity seems most careful to observe the rigid rules of logic, and he earnestly preached “Christ crucified,” making the Jewish Scriptures the ground of his argument. For three successive Sabbath days, he dwelt upon this theme, and the whole population of the city became interested and aroused, some prepared to embrace the Christian faith, and others to oppose it.

The sleepless jealousy of the Jews was soon thoroughly aroused, and having gathered a mob of worthless idlers, they assaulted the house of Jason, with whom the apostles lodged.

"Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," St. Luke tells us, were the enemies of the gospel at Thessalonica; and the same thing has been true of every generation since. One might be tempted to dwell longer on this significant fact, but we must observe the movements of the crowd of rioters who are furiously assaulting Jason's house. Their object was to seize Paul and Silas, and drag them before the magistrates; but it so happened, that the apostles were then absent from the house, and when the frenzied mob found themselves thus disappointed, they seized Jason, and other inoffensive Christians, and dragged them to the place of justice. In noisy and excited words, they urged the strange accusation of the text: "*These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.*"

The apostles of our Lord were often charged with doing things of which they were wholly innocent, but, on this occasion, the complaint was true. They were "turning the world upside down," and this was to be the only business of their lives.

The Church and kingdom of God, of which they were the rulers and teachers, has acted on human nature with a power unknown before, and while in form and constitution bearing a close resemblance to the kingdoms of the world, it has outlived the mightiest of them. "Though of the humblest origin, it has overshadowed every other institution of the ancient world. The modern nations have lived with an intense vitality; yet the Christian Church has entwined itself around every por-

tion of their historical development, and has affixed its impress on their social life, their literature, their art, and their philosophy" (C. A. Row, Prebendary of St. Paul's).

The fishermen of Galilee, and the devoted men who have succeeded to their office and their work, have been striving to remedy the evil which the devil had brought upon our race. The world through his malign agency, has been upside down, and the purpose of Christianity is to restore it again to its lost estate.

"The kingdom of God," as St. Paul tells us, "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans xiv. 17).

The reign of God's dear Son, which prophecy had foretold, was not to consist in unimportant things, but its design was to bring men from the power of darkness, into the glorious liberty of His redeemed children.

Christ Jesus came to rescue us, both from the penalty and the power of sin; and the reality of this deliverance is to be proved by holy affections, and pure and useful lives.

The old tradition which relates how the Empress Helena went to the Holy Land, to find the Saviour's cross, has its lesson. After digging diligently, the workmen found three crosses, but no one could tell which was the true one. A dead corpse was brought, and laid upon one, and another, with no effect; but the moment it touched the Saviour's cross (so the legend runs) it started into life. The best possible evidence which Christianity can give that it came from God is the undeniable fact that it makes men, once dead in trespasses and sins, live a new and holy life.

The kingdom of God, which is turning the world "upside down," is not the mere outward form and drapery of religion, but its reality and its power. "The religion of the New Testament is a happy, hopeful, cheerful religion. Its peace, passing understanding, is as the bright shining after rain. Spiritual joy and delight in God are the secret source of self-sacrificing devotedness, and zeal tempered with love. These make willing workers, and if need be, willing martyrs. Men whose personal religion is their treasure and their rejoicing, who have sold all, that they may make the pearl of great price their own, will plead with their fellow-sinners earnestly, affectionately, and successfully; while a religion without joy in the Holy Ghost, is but a tread-mill drudgery and a weary burden" (Bishop Lee of Delaware).

If the great work of "turning the world upside down," is to be helped forward by ourselves, it can only be when we are prompted in our endeavors by the Spirit of Christ, and when we have learned the secret of being strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Many a devoted minister of God, who has ventured upon this train of remark, has been ready to exclaim with the prophet, "Ah, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" (Ezek. xx. 49.)

Religion in the abstract, calls forth no remark, and excites no alarm, but when it is made a personal matter, and when the question is brought home to us, whether or not we have Christ dwelling in our hearts, and influencing our daily lives, the unbelieving world, and even the lukewarm Christian, begins to suspect us of cant, or of hypocrisy. The purest principles of the gospel are by no means incompatible with staunch and

conservative views concerning the nature of God's kingdom; and it may be fairly questioned whether any very permanent progress can be made in "turning the world upside down," without due regard to apostolical usage.

It is to be hoped, indeed, that there are few well-instructed Christians who would not be willing to adopt old Bishop Hall's estimate of the Bible and the Church: "The Scripture is the sun; the church is the clock. The sun we know to be sure and regularly constant in his motions; the clock, as it may fall out, may go too fast or too slow. As then we should condemn him of folly that should profess to trust the clock rather than the sun, so we can not but justly tax the credulity of those who would rather trust to the Church than to the Scriptures."

Christians under the leadership of their Divine Lord, the Prince of Peace, are waging a fierce warfare against the usurping power of darkness, and, at the close of this conflict, the world will be revolutionized, and every loyal heart be turned to God. Are we bearing our part in this warfare?

It is related of Michael Angelo, that while walking with some friends through an obscure street of Florence, he discovered a fine block of marble lying neglected in a yard, half buried in dirt and rubbish. Regardless of his holiday dress, he forthwith set about clearing away the heap of filth, much to the astonishment of his companions, who anxiously inquired what he was looking for. "O there's an angel *in* this stone," was the answer, "and I must get it out." The block of marble was removed to his studio, and with mallet and chisel, he set patiently to work upon it, and in course of time Michael Angelo transformed the rude stone into a glorious triumph of art.

Many an ignorant, neglected child, living in our neighborhood, might be changed, by Christian care and kindness, into the image and likeness of our Lord; and no one who hears me, need delude himself with the absurd idea that he is doing his part towards "turning the world upside down," while he remains unmindful of such obligations. The end of all things is at hand, and with the realities of death and the judgment before us, none of us can afford to be triflers. We can not hope to perform material miracles, and yet we can be successful workers for God.

Fancy a little blind girl climbing up on her father's knee, and fondly caressing him, while she says, in words which bring anguish to his heart, "Oh, papa! I wish so much that I could see you!"

He is utterly powerless to cure her blindness, but he can lead some perishing sinner, spiritually blind, to the Son of God, whose healing touch will impart to him the light of life.

If I were asked to name the special hindrance, above all others, in the way of the world's being "turned upside down," by the spread of the gospel, I should be obliged to say, the worldliness of Christians, and their sinful greed. Did our dear Lord mean any thing by those emphatic words, "Ye can not serve God and mammon?" (St. Matt. vi. 24.)

"Mammon has enriched his thousands and damned his ten thousands" (Dr. South).

A wealthy Christian who had the reputation of being "mighty in the Scriptures," being called upon to contribute to a worthy object, politely answered, "This is certainly a noble cause, and I wish I could do something

for it. Business is, however, at so low an ebb, and my taxes are so enormous, that I am really unable."

"My friend," said the solicitor, "we have often asked you to explain the meaning of some difficult passage of the Bible, and always received a satisfactory reply. What does Jesus mean when He says, 'Sell that ye have, and give alms'?"

The good brother could not answer. It would have cost him a hundred dollars to do so.

Ah! beloved, if we are always investing in stocks and lands and houses for ourselves, and pleading the pinching effects of these earthly expenditures as a reason why we do not build churches and establish schools and support missionaries and foster other agencies for good, ought not the Lord's commandment to be ringing in our listless ears, "Sell that ye have, and give alms?"

The greedy rich man dies, and the world asks, "How much did he leave?" He had worldly goods in rich abundance, but he has left them all!

The poor Christian dies, and if the same question be asked, "What did he leave?" the answer is, "He left nothing; but he has taken much with him. He has gone to his eternal home laden with the blessings of the helpless, the old, the widow, and the fatherless!"

Happy the Christians, be they rich or poor, against whom the followers of the prince of darkness furiously cry out, as they note the abundant works of faith and love, "*These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also!*"

SERMON LV.

SAFETY AND SUCCESS IN DOING GOD'S WORK.

(Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.)

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."—ACTS xviii. 9, 10.

As St. Paul wended his way along the streets of Athens, his observant eye was attracted by magnificent temples and gorgeous shrines, built in honor of a multitude of heathen deities. Well might his spirit be stirred within him, when he saw that the inhabitants of the most polished city upon earth, were thus "wholly given to idolatry." He was also filled with anxious concern about those he had left in Macedonia, and overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness (I Thess. iii. 1), and yet, never for one moment did he forget the errand which had brought him to Greece. He enquired for the Jewish synagogue, at Athens, and there, among his own countrymen, he first proclaimed his message.

If ever a preacher of the gospel was tempted to make a display of his learning and eloquence, it was when the rival schools of philosophers, the Stoics and Epicureans, invited St. Paul to explain to them the tenets of the new religion which he had come to introduce among them. He may have felt the swelling of a sanctified ambition,

in thus meeting the Athenian philosophers on their own favorite field, but he did not turn aside from the great subject of his preaching everywhere, "the doctrine of Jesus and the resurrection" (xvii. 18). Having so lately passed Stagirus, the birthplace of Aristotle, he was not unmindful of his syllogism.

The Messiah expected by the Jews must suffer, die, and rise again.

This Jesus who was preached unto them suffered, died, and rose again.

Therefore, the Jesus thus preached must be the Christ.

Although the two leading sects of Greek philosophers were antagonistic to each other, they both became united in their opposition to St. Paul. They scorned the idea of a crucified Redeemer. So anxious was the apostle to reach the hearts of these cultivated men, that he "disputed with them daily in the market-place"; a method of discussion by question and response which was universal among the Greeks. These spirited debates attracted so much attention, that, by common consent, the crowd adjourned to the Areopagus, where all the great trials of religion and politics were conducted.

St. Paul's address, on this occasion, was a master-piece. Waving his hand, in graceful gesticulation, he arrested attention by the remark that every thing which he had observed, since his arrival in the city, had given evidence that they were a very devotional people. While he abhorred the idols which they worshipped, he began in this guarded way, that he might secure for himself a patient hearing. Having conciliated their good-will by giving them credit for a devotional spirit, he desired, now, to show them Who was the only proper object of

divine worship. "As I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown God.'"

How his heart yearned to make known to these benighted idolaters, the one only God! After a rapid survey of the ordering of Divine providence over the world, he brought his argument closer home to his astonished hearts. "By the mouth of their own poets they professed themselves to be the offspring of God, and yet they worshipped wood and stone—the work of their own hands. Aratus, the poet whom St. Paul quotes, was a native of Tarsus, and he must have been acquainted with his writings in the schools of his native place. Perhaps the preacher glanced toward the colossal statue of Minerva, the patron saint of the city, fixed on the top of the temple that crowned the Acropolis, the pride of Athens, and the work of her greatest artist, while he uttered the witherings words: 'Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.'"

St. Paul told them that God had winked at such blind superstition in past ages, but now that He had sent His Son into the world, to enlighten its dark places, and to show men the truth, He commanded all to repent, and believe the gospel. This bold declaration raised an uproar, and the voice of the eloquent preacher was silenced. Nevertheless, some good seed had been scattered on that stony ground. The record is brief, but not unimportant. "Certain men clave unto him and believed; among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (xvii. 34).

Dionysius was one of the judges of the court in which St. Paul had spoken, and Damaris is supposed to have been of high rank. Although "not many mighty, not many noble," embraced the gospel in those days of trial and danger, yet the great ones of the world were never shut out from its privileges, unless they wilfully rejected them. "It is a melancholy reflection that the gospel in great measure failed in Athens. There is no epistle of Paul to the Athenians, while no less than two letters of his to each of the two great mercantile cities, Thessalonica and Corinth, have come down to us. Athens in the midst sat alone as a queen, representing the philosophy and the art of Greece. There the kingdom of Christ could not obtain a footing. The wealth and luxury, and even profligacy of Corinth, did not present so hard a wayside for the seed as the earthly wisdom of Athens" (Arnot).

Disappointed, no doubt, with this failure to accomplish all that he had hoped, St. Paul now proceeded to Corinth, a distance of forty-five miles. On several accounts, this was a better place than Athens for beginning the work of evangelizing Greece. It was a thriving commercial city, where the scattered sons of Israel formed a large and influential part of the population. Shortly before St. Paul's arrival, their number had been greatly increased, by the fact that the Emperor Claudius had just banished the Jews from Rome.

Among these refugees, were two natives of Pontus, Aquilla and Priscilla. Although they were persons of some property, they still followed their trade of tent-makers. St. Paul having learned this trade himself, in his youth, naturally made their acquaintance; their house becoming his temporary home, while he shared with

them in their daily tasks. On the Sabbath, Aquilla and his wife Priscilla, accompanied by St. Paul, went up to the Jewish synagogue, where many of their countrymen had assembled for worship.

We can easily imagine what ridicule was poured upon them by the idolatrous people of wicked Corinth. In the temple of Venus, alone, there was a thousand women living in open sin.

When the services of the synagogue were ended, St. Paul spoke to his countrymen concerning Jesus of Nazareth, giving them the most unanswerable proofs that He was the promised Messiah.

Thus, days and weeks went by, six days of labor in the work-shop, followed by the day of rest, which was diligently improved for the preaching of the gospel. At last Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia, and their arrival inspired St. Paul with fresh courage. He now wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, his mind being especially drawn to these early converts by reason of the good tidings which had just reached him concerning them. By this time, the Jews at Corinth, had begun to show a fierce hostility to the gospel, and St. Paul, according to his usual course, turned his attention to the Gentiles. These Gentiles were, no doubt, very wicked, but they were not so full of self-conceit, and wedded to their own ways, as the Jews.

A proselyte, named Justus, offered his house as a place for Christian worship, and beneath his humble roof, the first church in Corinth was organized. The house of Justus being very near to the synagogue, the two congregations of Jews and Christians must have jostled each other on the street, as they came and went. Many of the

Corinthians were converted to the true faith, and received holy baptism. The larger proportion of these were Gentiles, and of the poorer classes. One prominent Jew, however, is mentioned; Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, who, with his family, became members of the Christian Church.

On ordinary occasions, St. Paul left the work of baptizing to the priests and deacons; devoting himself to the peculiar duties of a bishop: ordination, confirmation, and the exercise of discipline. The conversion of Crispus, however, was deemed to be so important an event, that he baptized him with his own hand (I Cor. i. 14-16).

The Jews ~~were~~ were angry enough when ordinary people dropped away, one by one, and became Christians, but when the ruler of the synagogue boldly declared himself to be a disciple of Jesus, their opposition waxed still more fierce and bitter.

What a graphic picture have we here, of the experience of Christian missionaries, in every age and country! With every fresh accession to the Church, the outward pressure will increase, and as St. Paul, at Corinth, needed some special assurance from above, to strengthen him for the trial, so will God's consolations not be wanting now.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

Thus does the Lord now cheer and counsel his servants. He bids all who bear His glorious message, to speak out fearlessly, confidently; proclaiming the gospel of His grace.

The safeguard of the faithful messenger of salvation is the Lord Himself: "I am with thee." Such security is perfect and divine. The messenger is immortal, until his work is done.

"I have much people in this city," is God's assurance to us now. It is for us, preachers, lay-helpers, district visitors, Sunday-school teachers, nurses of the sick; it is for us, the Lord's servants, to seek them out.

St. Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. For a year and six months, he devoted himself to that special work. We are laboring for the same heavenly Master, with the same promise of assistance and reward.

Are we laboring diligently, and with a good courage?

SERMON LVI.

INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION.

(Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“Gallio cared for none of those things.”—ACTS xviii. 17.

GALLIO was the brother of the famous philosopher, Seneca.

While St. Paul was preaching, with marked success, in dissolute Corinth, the Jews, maddened by bigotry and unbelief, rose up, with one accord, against him. Gallio held the office of Proconsul, and to his tribunal the apostle was rudely dragged.

Seneca describes his brother as a mild, amiable man, and one whose popular manners made him a general favorite. Although he had only lately entered upon his office of Proconsul, the Jews were well aware of his pliant disposition, and they hoped, as their mode of worship was tolerated by the pagan authorities of Rome, that when they accused St. Paul of a violation of their religious law, he would either be brought before the criminal court of the empire, or given up to his own enraged countrymen for punishment.

It happened, however, that Gallio was a very different person from what the Jews had supposed him to be.

It will interest you to look in for a moment on the scene: “Gallio is seated on that proconsular chair, from which judicial sentences were pronounced by the Roman

magistrates. Before this heathen authority, the Jews are preferring their accusation with eager clamor. Their chief speaker is Sosthenes, the successor of Crispus, or (it may be) the ruler of another synagogue. At the moment when the apostle is "about to open his mouth," Gallio will not even hear his defence, but finding that the matter was one of no public interest, but only a petty question of the Jewish law, he utterly refused to attend to it" (Conybeare).

A tumult arose, as the motley crowd rushed forth from the judgment-hall, but Gallio gave himself no concern to quell the outbreak, or to punish the offenders. Jew and Christian were alike to him. St. Luke gives a clear insight into his good-natured, inefficient character, when he tells us in the text, that "*Gallio cared for none of those things.*"

Irresolution and indecision were his prominent faults, and he may fairly be presented as a type of a large class of people, who do a grievous wrong to themselves, and to the world. Like those of our own day, who feel no special interest in religion, Gallio considered it a mere "question of words and names" (verse 15).

Men try to push aside the main issue from their own consciences, by speaking of such things as trifling matters of caprice and speculation. They put on a careless air, and pretend to be cool and unconcerned.

Providence may shower abundant blessings on them, but all are received as a thing of course. No gratitude is expressed, and no obedience follows. Should God try the severe hand of discipline on them, they too often remain stubborn and unsubdued. All this while, the precious fruits of true religion are exhibited in the useful,

unobtrusive lives of a mother, a wife, a sister, or some dear friend.

God's ministers, kindly and persistently, warn and teach. God's Holy Spirit gently strives. In spite of these various influences for good, the heartless, irresolute character of Gallio is reflected in all they say or do. They "care for none of those things." Their hearts are wedded to the perishing world, and their eyes blinded to the preciousness of eternal truth. Sometimes this perilous state of indifference is the effect of long-indulged, besetting sins; sometimes it follows close upon the mad and unscrupulous pursuit of gain.

Sometimes a man is kept in a state of irresolution, by the morbid dread of being talked about, should he show a disposition to attend to the interests of his soul. It is painful to be obliged, in simple honesty, to add, that the coldness and the inconsistencies of Christians, encourage yet stronger feelings of carelessness and disgust, in those who narrowly scrutinize their short-comings.

None of these reasons, however, offer the shadow of an excuse, why any immortal being, on the very verge of eternity, should thus trifle with the commands of God, and the well-being of his soul.

There is not a business man present here, who is so blind to his worldly interests as to be the dupe of a sly trickster who should attempt to sell him a house, or a lot with a flaw in the title; and yet some of you are allowing the devil to swindle you out of all the wealth of heaven! If you are to secure a place in that better country, you will be forced to "care" for these things soon! Even the long-suffering patience of God will be worn out by your inexcusable delay. The pains of sick-

ness, and the near approach of death, will recall you to your senses, if nothing else will do it.

Every indifferent hearer of the message of redeeming love, is nurturing in his bosom, the undying worm of self-reproach, whose anguish is more intense than the quenchless flames of eternal wrath. It would be terrible to hear from the lips of the eternal Judge: "Thou hast destroyed thyself!" but it is more unspeakably terrific to have the perpetual consciousness, of having wilfully done the deed of self-destruction.

Take time now for a brief self-catechising. A very little while and you will not be here. All earthly things which loom up so largely before you now, will be nothing, less than nothing, then. The familiar words Death, Judgment, Eternity, will have become realities. Can you afford to say, even by acting the part of an indifferent hearer, that you "care for none of these things"?

An honest, hard-working Yorkshire man, who earned a decent living for his family, by drawing coal in his cart, from the pit to the neighboring town, was a fair specimen of the countless thousands, whom we know of, who labor only for the bread which perisheth.

He never hindered his wife and children from attending church, but he would not allow them to speak a word to him about religion. This neglect of the one thing needful, gave the good woman much unhappiness, and she could only pray to God that He would soften and change his heart. The neighbors all respected the hard-working fellow, but it made them sad to see him thus living the life of a heathen. One of them took occasion soon after his recovery from an accident which had kept him at the hospital for a week, to draw him on to speak

of things eternal, by his remarking that his wife was greatly rejoiced to see him out again.

"Well," remarked his friend, "you could make her much more glad than that."

"How?" he answered quickly; "there is nothing I would not do to make her happy."

"It would be the most joyful day she ever had," returned the other, "to see you go to the Great Physician, to get your soul cured from sin."

The man's face changed in a moment. "I thought," said he, "that you had too much sense to talk to me about my soul, as you call it. I tell you again, as I have often told you before that I mean 'to die like my old horse,' and then, I suppose like him, they will bury me, and I shall be done with."

His face grew more serious at the idea of thus leaving his wife and children forever, and his friend, availing himself of this advantage, said to him: "You can not die like your old horse, because you have a soul, and the horse has not, and your soul can never die."

"About that," answered the man, "I don't know, and I don't mean to care. You may as well save your breath, and stop talking on the subject."

His friend feeling that a crisis had come, and what he had to say must be said now, lifted up his heart in silent prayer for wisdom from above, and then, in a simple, touching way, drew the picture of a family bereft of husband and father, but one who had died in the confidence of a certain faith, and in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope.

He dwelt upon the fact that the sorrow of the survivors was lightened when they thought of their beloved

as being then happy in Paradise, and of the day when all of them could go to meet him there.

In contrast he gave the case of another who had passed, without hope, into the eternal world. His family dared not think of him. The idea of a lost soul was too awful. The wife must forget that he had been her husband, and the children that they had a father. His name was never mentioned. Every token they had of him was put out of sight, and they even left the house they lived in because it reminded them of him who had so miserably perished.

The thought that his own wife and children would ever strive thus to forget him, made the honest laborer tremble and grow pale. The hot tears filled his eyes, and his friend, feeling that he had done his duty, left him to his own reflections.

The story is a true one, and it has a pleasant ending. Five years later the man died, the same friend stood by his bedside: "But for God's mercy," he whispered, "and your kind words, I should have died like my old horse. Now, thank God, I have a good hope, in death, through Christ Jesus!"

Can you place your hand upon your heart, my hearer, and say, with truth, that you "care for none of these things"? or, that you never will care for them?

You would hardly be mad enough to do it. All now present hope to have God for their Friend in the hour of death and at the day of judgment. They have something to do besides hoping. He expects them to make Him their Friend. "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos iv. 12) is the emphatic warning to each laggard soul.

Like those who stand in dread suspense at the near

approach of an advancing host, the only hope for sinners is to meet the Divine Leader with a flag of truce; proffer negotiations of surrender and penitence; and thankfully to accept of the terms of mercy. The soul of each one chooses its own future. You, my hearers, are choosing now.

General invitations amount to little. If you say to a friend: "Come around some time and take a meal with us!" he will not be very likely to do it. On the other hand, if you fix the day and the hour, and he agrees to come, the matter is settled.

So, now, with reference to higher and holier things, I do not content myself with a general exhortation to remember God, and to prepare to meet Him, but I give the invitation a definite shape. I invite you to come to your Saviour in baptism and confirmation, and I urge you to delay no longer.

"Like a child that is lost
From its home in the night,
I grope through the darkness
And cry for the light;
Yea, all that is in me
Cries out for the day.
Come, Jesus, my Master,
Illumine my way!

"In the conflicts that pass
'Twixt my soul and my God,
I walk as one walketh
A fire-path, unshod;
And in my despairing
Sit dumb by the way.
Come, Jesus, my Master,
And heal me, I pray!"

SERMOM LVII.

BURNING THE MAGICAL BOOKS.

(Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“Many of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them.”—ACTS xix., part of 19th verse.

EPHESUS was the most beautiful city of Asia Minor. Heathenism here reigned supreme. Here were the most magnificent temples of its gods. Here the worship of idols was celebrated with imposing pomp. Here stood the Temple of Diana, the wonder and glory of the East.

Here the worship of false gods could rally to its defence the strength and terror of the civil arm. Here long use and deeply-rooted prejudice had blinded the minds and hardened the hearts of men.

In the midst of a city where the prospect for the gospel seemed so unpromising, St. Paul set vigorously to work.

The people of Ephesus were fond of studying curious arts, such as sorcery, magic, and witchcraft. The possession of these real or fancied powers, gave the teachers of idolatry a powerful influence over the public mind.

“We are not to suppose that the apostles were always able to work miracles at will. An influx of supernatural power was given to them, at the time, and according to the circumstances that required it. And the

character of the miracles was not always the same. They were accommodated to the peculiar forms of sin, superstition, and ignorance they were required to oppose. Here, at Ephesus, St. Paul was in the face of magicians, like Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh; and it is distinctly said that his miracles were 'not ordinary wonders' (xix. 11), from which we may infer that they were different from those which he usually performed" (Conybeare).

For two years, the apostle diligently set forth the truths of the gospel, to Jews and Greeks, who dwelt in Ephesus; and in this great city which was the chief seat of "the black art" of sorcery, God gave him power to overwhelm the agents of the devil, by still more wonderful displays of miraculous gifts.

The acts of supernatural healing were so frequent, that the astonished people believed that handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched his person, derived from him virtue to cure the sufferers to whom they were applied; and St. Luke assures us that this was no delusion, but that "diseases departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them."

Some wandering exorcists, the seven sons of one Sceva, a scribe, who claimed to cast out evil spirits by their incantations, observing the wonders which were wrought, when St. Paul invoked the name of the Lord Jesus, most presumptuously tried to do the same.

The spirit thus addressed, indignantly replied: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" The words were hardly spoken, before the man possessed with the evil spirit, leaped upon them with such supernatural fury, that he overpowered the seven brothers, and drove them, naked and wounded, from his presence. This incident

made a profound sensation, and the report of it spread far and wide.

The proofs afforded by the astonishing miracles of St. Paul, were exactly suited to the exigencies of the case, and the effect was signal and immediate. Those who had been first and foremost in the practice of witchcraft, came and frankly confessed their evil deeds; and to show their utter detestation of what had so long been the business of their lives, they brought together the costly books in which the secrets of their arts were treasured up, and publicly burned them.

The sacrifice was real, and to men whose bread depended on the mysteries of their trade, a very considerable one; for when they counted the price of these books, it amounted to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

For the most obvious reason in the world, none would be so prejudiced, and so little disposed to receive the gospel, as these adepts in mystic arts; and, yet, when the truth was thus powerfully presented even to their biased minds, they behaved like honest men. They "believed"; then they "confessed and showed their deeds;" and, lastly, as the crowning proof of sincerity of heart, they brought their costly books together, and burned them.

Now, what were these several steps but the ordinary and necessary working of faith, repentance, and amendment, in every sincere seeker after truth and salvation?

The sacrifice which these converted magicians made, deserves more than a hasty notice. Great and important lessons may be learned from it. And, first, no stronger proof could possibly be demanded that they were perfectly sincere.

By destroying the books which contained the curious

secrets of their art, they showed that what had once been their glory, was now their shame; and what had hitherto been studied with delight, was regarded with unaffected abhorrence. A radical change had taken place in their views, and, hence, their hopes and plans could no longer run in their accustomed channel.

So, too, in the conversion of every soul, from darkness unto light. The cause, the manner, and the time of such change may be altogether unknown; but some tokens of the fact will be manifest, concerning which there can be no possible mistake. The magical books will be burned. Every thing which has helped, in any degree, to bind us to the service of the Prince of Darkness, the Spirit that worketh so subtly, and so successfully, in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2), will be instantly, and completely given up.

The magician is often looked upon as being in league with Satan. "There is a broader sense in which every one of us by nature holds intercourse with fallen angels, and learns from them how to put deceits on others and himself. Yea, and we have our books upon magic. What are half the volumes with which the land is deluged, but volumes which can teach nothing but to serve the devil better? The question of the apostle to the Galatians has lost none of its force: 'Who hath bewitched you, that ye should obey the truth?' Nay, not only may every unconverted man be declared in some great sense, under the influence of sorcery; he may be said to practice sorcery; for he is instrumental, whether by his precept or his example, to the seducing others into sin, and confirming their attachment to the world" (Melvill).

Each one has his besetting sin, and each one knows

what this sin is. No person is any thing more than a Christian in name, until this particular sin be given up. Your own magical book must be devoted to the flames.

Cool, calculating self-interest, while looking upon the curious and costly volumes in which the hidden lore of the sorcerers was contained, might be willing to confess the wrongfulness of such deceitful arts, but would earnestly plead that the books should at least be preserved.

They might be stored away safely in some secret closet, or laid on some dust-covered shelf, and thus be kept as mere literary curiosities; the remains of an antiquated and dead superstition.

Might there not, however, be some hazard in this apparently harmless proposal? Should the steadfastness of Christian faith become shaken, was there no danger that the old feelings of the magician might revive? Was it not wiser and better by far, to cut off all possibility of return to ways so corrupting and wrong?

The Christian, in like manner, who would make sure of his faith, must root out, with strong and unflinching determination, the tastes, the occasions, and enticements, which may draw him back into the paths he has left. No half-way sacrifices can be allowed. The magical books must be burned. It might have been safe enough for some of these new converts to Christianity, to have preserved the costly manuscripts which locked up the secrets of such wonderful arts. There might have been no danger of their falling away into former courses of evil; but might not others, less settled in the faith, and of weaker judgment, be corrupted thereby? Might not these hidden treasures of the black and dangerous art, be afterwards brought forth to deceive and destroy?

The besetting infirmity which once kept us from running the way of God's commandments, is that which common prudence should teach us most anxiously to watch.

Knowing the peculiar dangers of this sin from which we have made our escape, it becomes our bounden duty to warn others against it. This active sympathy and unselfish effort, in the cause of truth and holiness, is akin to the praiseworthy spirit which prompted the Ephesian converts to burn their magical books.

Happy are they whose religion abounds in such unquestionable tokens of sincerity and devotion.

The magicians did not stop to count up the cost until after the sacrifice had actually been made. Convinced that the thing ought to be done, they lost no time in doing it.

There never can be any real service of God, which cost no sacrifice. We are not our own. We are bought with a price. It becomes us, therefore, to "glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits," which are His (I Cor. vi. 19, 20).

When a missionary in Burmah wanted a teacher for one of the most warlike tribes, he asked his boatman if he would go. He reminded him, however, that instead of his present wages of fifteen rupees a month, he could only expect four rupees a month as a Christian teacher.

After praying over the matter, the poor fellow came back, and the missionary said: "Well, Shapon, what is your decision? Can you go and teach those wild people for four rupees a month?"

"No, teacher," he answered, "I could not go for four rupees a month, but I can go for Christ." And for Christ's sake he did go.

The converted magicians of Ephesus have been preaching to us to-day. Let us emulate their noble example, and doom to utter destruction every thing upon which a pure and holy God must look with displeasure. This is a matter which admits of no delay.

O professing Christian, beware lest some magical book be yet unburned! lest some secret habit of thy life be staining thy soul with deep-dyed guilt!

And you whose judgments have long ago been convinced, but who have stubbornly held back from the discharge of duty, take warning while you may.

When grim Death shall lay his icy hand upon your beating heart, and say, "Be still! be still!" it will be quite too late to offer sacrifice to God!

SERMON LVIII.

ST. PAUL AT TROAS.

(Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“As Paul was long preaching, he (a young man named Eutychus) sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.”—ACTS xx., part of 9th verse.

TROAS was a Phrygian city, on the shores of the Hellespont, and in the midst of that wide tract of country where Troy once stood. Here the famous heroes of old blind Homer's song, acted their parts on the busy stage of life.

Troas was one of those important points where St. Paul must have been anxious to see the Church firmly established, but he had thus far been able to bestow little care upon it.

On his first visit (Acts xvi. 8) he was prevented from remaining, by a supernatural vision, which called him to hasten to Macedonia, with the glad tidings which he was commissioned to preach.

When he came to Troas the second time, although a door of usefulness was opened to him, and he gathered a small congregation of Christian people, yet his impatience to embrace his well-beloved Titus was so great, that his stay was brief and unsatisfactory (II Cor. ii. 12). In the hurry of his departure, he left his cloak, for which he afterwards wrote to Timothy (II Timothy iv. 13).

On the occasion of his third visit (which brings us to the incident connected with the text), he would be more than usually anxious to do his work at Troas well, because he had thus seemed to have slighted it before. He appears to have come upon the little band of Christians somewhat unawares. No flaming announcement had been made, by placards on the walls of public baths and theatres, that the eloquent apostle would preach; and there was no fitting temple in which public worship might be celebrated.

Christians were poor and despised; and the dark and unsightly garrets where they met, were jealousy watched.

St. Paul's labors during the early days of the week which he spent at Troas are not mentioned; but we are sure that the time was well employed. Full details are furnished concerning the last day of his visit. "It was the evening which succeeded the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sunday morning the vessel was about to sail. The Christians at Troas were gathered together at this solemn time, to celebrate that feast of love which the last commandment of Christ had enjoined on all His followers. The place was an upper room, with a recess or balcony projecting over the street, or the court. The night was dark; three weeks had not elapsed since the Passover, and the moon only appeared as a faint crescent in the early part of the night" (Conybeare). St. Luke (whose painter's skill is discovered in his graphic description of the scene) mentions that many lamps were burning in the room where the congregation had assembled.

This circumstance was probably spoken of, just as an eye-witness is accustomed to note down little incidents,

simply because the whole scene came back to his memory with all the vividness of a picture.

The upper room was crowded, and the air oppressively hot, but St. Paul, bearing in mind that he must bid these people farewell on the morrow, and wishing to clear himself of all responsibility, if any neglected the privileges of the gospel, preached with his wonted earnestness, and even prolonged his discourse until midnight; the last sermon, perhaps, which he would ever preach to them.

Think, for a moment, of the uncomfortable, and dangerous circumstances, under which the Christians of Troas were willing—and even thankful—to assemble for worship; and, then, let us ask ourselves whether we do not allow very trifling hindrances to keep us from God's house.

Some Christian people are so spiritually dead, that they will complain because the house of prayer, in the depth of winter, is not tempered to the same degree of warmth as a parlor; or, because amidst the oppressive heat of summer, it may not always be so open to the breeze as a villa by the sea-side! Such luxurious, self-indulgent Christians, would not have endured the stifling atmosphere of that crowded room at Troas, even for the sake of the unusual privilege of hearing St. Paul preach.

Besides prayers and sermon, you will observe that on the occasion of which we are now speaking, the Lord's Supper was administered. The celebration of this heavenly feast is generally referred to in the book of Acts, as "the breaking of bread" (ii. 46; xx. 7).

The early Christians received it every Lord's Day,

and we may fairly conclude from this, that those persons whose lukewarmness is satisfied with communing three or four times a year, are falling far short of their religious obligation, and neglecting a most important means of grace.

It is simply absurd to set down frequent communion as an evidence of a very advanced and dangerous stamp of churchmanship.

Read in John Wesley's private journal. "Sunday, April 3d, 1737. Sunday, and every day in this great and holy week, we had a sermon and the Holy Communion."

"Sunday, Dec. 24th, 1738. We had the Blessed Sacrament every day this week, and were comforted on every side."

And then in answer to the objection, that Christians can not be expected to commune very often, since they must have ample time to prepare themselves, John Wesley says: "Inasmuch as we come to the Lord's table, not to give Him any thing, but to receive whatsoever He sees best for us, there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary. No fitness is required at the time of communicating, but a sense of our utter sinfulness and helplessness."

While St. Paul was engaged in his earnest discourse, an incident occurred which filled the whole assembly with dismay. A young man, named Eutychus, who was seated in the balcony, being overcome by heat and weariness, had sunk into a deep slumber, and fell from the third story, to the pavement below. He was taken up dead, and loud lamentations soon interrupted the solemnity of the religious service.

St. Paul's "long preaching" is referred to as the direct

occasion of the accident. We are not to suppose that this was one continuous sermon, for such a discourse would have proved fatal to others besides poor Eutychus. No doubt a considerable portion of the time was occupied in familiar conversation; the people describing their difficulties and trials, and St. Paul giving them instructions and counsels; he, of course, being all the while the chief speaker.

Eutychus ought certainly to be excused for falling asleep, when we take into account the lateness of the hour, and the extreme length of the proceedings. Moreover, being "a young man," perhaps he did not feel much interest in a kingdom, whose best rewards are promised in another world.

St. Paul showed no ill-will to Eutychus, because he had failed to keep awake during his long discourse, but he hurried down with the affrighted congregation, to render what assistance he could. Embracing the young man in his arms, and praying earnestly in his behalf, as Elijah had done under like circumstances (II Kings iv. 34), he said cheerily to those who were giving way to immoderate grief: "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him!" How these consoling words must have thrilled the hearts of all, and with what gratitude must they have ascended again to the humble place of worship; the young man who had been thus miraculously raised from the dead, returning with them.

Great men are not always amiable; but St. Paul combined both qualities. As he lifted the lifeless body of Eutychus from the ground, and embraced him with all a father's tenderness, who could have imagined that this sympathizing friend was the great apostle of the Gentiles,

upon whose overburdened shoulders rested "the care of all the churches"?

Sympathy—true Christian sympathy—what a source of comfort to the sorrowing! As in the shock from the electric battery, every one feels it, who holds the same chain; and, as in the delicate tracery of nerves which runs through every part of the body, one member can not suffer, unless all suffer with it,—so ought it to be in our concern for others.

A heart-broken woman sat upon the steps of a dark prison, weeping bitterly over the condemnation of a ruined son.

"What aileth thee, sister?" said a stranger, passing by, who saw, and pitied her; a Quaker, in his plain attire, and broad-brimmed hat.

"My heart is broken," she answered, wringing her hands in agony.

"Can I do any thing for thee?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"Well, God can help thee, and I will go home and ask Him to do it."

A very little thing, indeed, which that kind man did; and yet, the poor woman arose, strengthened by the power of sympathy. The stranger who spoke the gracious words, had the spirit of St. Paul, when he comforted the friends of Eutychus. There is one more lesson to be learned from the history before us. Although none of you may be guilty of such an impropriety as to fall asleep in God's house, yet some may be in a far worse condition than drowsy Eutychus. Are there none now present, who, without having closed their eyes in sleep, are really in a condition of spiritual slumber; their thoughts wander-

ing through all the infinite space of worldly vanities, and with no love to God in their hearts?

Such persons, thus overcome by the spirit of indifference and unconcern, may not fall down from the third loft, like the young man at Troas, but their fate may be infinitely worse. They may fall away from God, and from heaven, into the bottomless pit, from which there can be no possible hope of deliverance.

If I am speaking to such slumberers, I can but pray for them, in unaffected anxiety of soul, that the same Spirit of God by whose wisdom St. Paul preached, and by whose power he called back the dead to life, may stir up their slumbering faculties, and say: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

Alas! I must not forget, that while the thoughtless worldling folds his hands in careless security, Christians, also, forget themselves, and sink down into spiritual lethargy. "Some somnambulists have been able to walk on places where, had they been awake, they never would have been able to endure the dizzy height; and I see some Christians running awful risks which they would never venture upon, unless they had fallen into the deep sleep of carnal security" (Spurgeon).

"It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans xiii. 11).

We are daily drawing nearer and nearer to the kingdom of light, and in prospect of that state, we ought to live more and more in preparation for a world of glory. Christ's coming draws on apace. Let us see to it, that as He draws nearer to earth, we may draw nearer to heaven!

SERMON LIX.

TESTIFYING THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

(Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—ACTS xx., part of 24th verse.

A MAGNIFICENT temple stood at the head of the harbor of Ephesus, which was regarded by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world. It was built on artificial foundations in a marsh below the city, as a security against earthquakes. A fanatic, Hesostratus, who wished to make his name famous, set the temple on fire, which reduced it to ashes.

The marvellous structure which St. Paul beheld, on his arrival in Ephesus, was one which had been reared on the ruins of the former temple. It was set apart for the worship of Diana,—the month of May being sacred to her.

St. Paul labored for two years in Ephesus, and many of the inhabitants were turned from their idle vanities to serve the one true God.

A class of workmen in the city carried on a most lucrative trade, by the manufacture of portable images of Diana, to be carried home by those who came from distant places to worship at her shrine.

These interested persons watched with jealous eyes the gradual weakening of the iron fetters of idolatry, which had so long enslaved the ignorant and supersti-

tious, and their indignation burst forth against the man who was the master-spirit in the great work of reform. Demetrius, a leader among the artisans, stirred up the minds of those who followed the same profitable trade, and pointed out to them in a business-like way, how the law of self-preservation required them to silence St. Paul. The inflammable speech accomplished its purpose.

The excited image-makers raised a shout in honor of their favorite goddess, and running through the city, spread confusion and terror as they went. Crowds of people rushed to the theatre, and the ring-leaders having failed to drag St. Paul before the tribunal of public indignation, seized upon two of his friends, and hurried them away, with murderous intent. When the apostle heard of it, he was about to go in person, and satisfy the demands of the mob, but he was not allowed to do so. Moreover, his cause was zealously espoused by some of the pagan magistrates, who had conceived the highest admiration for him as a man. By their interference, and by a speech of the town-clerk, which was marked by remarkable tact and good sense, the fierce passions of the people were allayed, and the stone seats of the theatre were soon deserted. Thus wonderfully does God provide for the safety of His chosen servants.

St. Paul now devoted several months to a tour through Macedonia and Greece, and upon his return landed at Troas. A full account of his brief sojourn in this place must be reserved for another occasion.

When the hour arrived for St. Paul's departure from Troas his companions went on board the ship, while he arranged to cross the peninsula on foot, and join them at Assos, a port on its southern side. This would oblige

him to take a walk of twenty miles, but the fatigue would be more than made up to him by the pleasure of spending a few more hours with his Christian brethren of Troas. While the ship pursued its circuitous way around the headland the apostle bids farewell to his friends, and begins his solitary walk to Assos. Reaching the sandy shore, he discerns the ship approaching the landing, and soon he is on board, and they proceed on their voyage. It will be needless for us to follow the details. Having landed at the port of Miletus, he sent a message in haste to the elders, or priests, whom he had ordained to serve the Christian congregations in Ephesus and its neighborhood, to come and have a brief conference with him while the ship was detained in the harbor.

As the distance from Miletus to Ephesus was but thirty miles, it might be asked why St. Paul did not avail himself of so favorable an opportunity to visit his dear friends, the Christian converts in Ephesus. St. Luke has given the reason. He "had determined to sail by (*i. e.*, past) Ephesus, for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost."

The summons was immediately obeyed by the clergy of Ephesus, and we may picture to ourselves the little company gathered about the venerable apostle, listening with rapt attention to his words. His touching address need not be repeated here. However the office of the ministry might be degraded by any in aftertime, as a mere profession, he showed in every word and look that in his own case it was the life-consecration of a great and earnest nature, wrought up to the highest pitch of a divine enthusiasm, utterly unmindful of all self-interest and self-gratification. "Bonds and afflictions" were in

store for him, as he went on with his glorious work; "tears and temptations" which had already mingled so largely in his experience, must fall to his future lot. "But none of these things move me," said the brave soldier of the cross, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts xx. 24).

He was about to go "bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem," feeling that his whole work would be unfinished until he reached the holy city, and yet not knowing the things that should befall him there. As our blessed Lord has said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" (St. Luke xv. 50.)

St. Paul takes the elders of Ephesus to witness that his preaching of the gospel had been so clear, so full, so emphatic, that he felt himself "pure from the blood of all men."

At the close of this touching address, the whole company kneeled down upon the shore and united in solemn prayer. If there ever was an occasion when it was excusable to stand in prayer, this was one; but even when out of doors and on the damp sands of the sea-beach, these holy men kneeled in humble reverence before God. "Then followed an outbreak of natural grief which even Christian faith and resignation was not able to restrain. They fell on the apostle's neck and clung to him and kissed him again and again, sorrowing most because of his own foreboding announcement that they should never behold that countenance again, on which they had often gazed with reverence and love. But no long time could be de-

voted to the grief of separation. The wind was fair, and the vessel must depart. They accompanied the apostle to the edge of the water. The Christian brethren were torn from the embrace of their friends; and the ship sailed out into the open sea, while the presbyters prepared for their weary and melancholy journey to Ephesus" (Conybeare).

Every minister of Christ is reminded of his peculiar office and work, in St. Paul's statement of his own special purpose in the text: "*To testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" He is not a lawgiver, nor ruler, nor judge, but a witness of God's free love to man.

An old divine when preaching before the clergy, anticipated their final examination before the Judge of quick and dead. He represented the Judge as asking of one: "What did you preach for?"

"I preached, Lord, that I might keep a good parish which my father held before me, and which would otherwise have been lost to our family."

"Stand by, thou hast thy reward," said the Judge.

"And what did you preach for?" He said to another.

"Lord, I was applauded as a learned man, and I wished to secure the reputation of an orator."

"Stand by, thou hast had thy reward," was the answer.

The Judge said to a third: "And what did you preach for?"

"Lord," he meekly replied, "I neither aimed at the great things of the world, nor did I preach that I might display learning, or eloquence, but I preached that I might win perishing souls, and that I might promote Thy glory."

"Room! men and angels, make room for this man! He shall sit with Me on My throne!"

The testimony which the minister of Christ is commissioned to give is that which the world should rejoice to hear. He comes not from Sinai, with its fiery law, and its denunciations of woe, but from Bethlehem, with its message of salvation.

"To testify the gospel of the grace of God." "The God of all grace" (I Pet. v. 10) proclaims to His rebellious children, pardon and peace, if they will but comply with the reasonable conditions set forth in His holy word.

The blessings of "the gospel of the grace of God" are not to be obtained by purchase; the sinner has nothing to pay with. It is the good news of His free love to sinners; to be had without money, and without price.

How? Simply by accepting of it. Do you say that you would gladly do this? This is a very proper thing to resolve upon; but the question is, are you sincere? If so, nothing could keep you back from the appointed means of grace. No unbaptized person has accepted of the gospel. No one who is living in the neglect of the Holy Communion is trying to make his calling and election sure.

"The gospel of the grace of God" is something worth being in earnest about. Poor Christian, in the allegory, was thoroughly in earnest, when he put his fingers in his ears, and cried out, "Life! life! eternal life!"

St. Paul, who spoke so feelingly to the Ephesian elders concerning "the gospel of the grace of God," which he and they had been ordained to preach, had a bloody baptism to endure, before he entered into rest. Scorned and persecuted by the world; abandoned and almost forgotten by the churches which he had planted, we behold the aged man, weakened by long confinement in prison,

led by the soldier along the Appian way. We see the sword flash, and the head fall, and all is over. Nay! verily; all is not over. Then were fulfilled St. Paul's own glowing words of unclouded faith: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

Do you envy him, my hearer? you need not. St. Paul was no selfish man, satisfied to be safe himself. He rejoiced that others would be happy. "Not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II Tim. iv. 8).

O! impenitent sinner, there is a crown of glory in store for thee, also, and fulness of joy, if thou wilt believe and obey the gospel.

SERMON LX.

ST. PAUL'S CONFESSION IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM.

(Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.)

"There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve."—ACTS xxvii. 23.

THE world of letters has long boasted of Homer's description of a storm at sea. One chief actor (Ulysses) is kept constantly before us. He bravely buffets with the waves; he is supported in his struggles by the love of life; he overcomes every difficulty at the last, and kisses the ground with joy.

As a description parallel in many respects with this, we have St. Luke's account of the shipwreck of St. Paul. With all the points of resemblances however, what a marked difference between Ulysses, and the great apostle to the Gentiles! The one manifests a proud insensibility to danger; the other is busy, even at the height of the tempest, in comforting his fellow-sufferers with an assurance of deliverance. Ulysses hesitates when the goddess advises him to cast himself into the waves; he fears it may be the suggestion of a hostile divinity.

The God whom St. Paul serves speaks to him in no ambiguous words.

For three days the storm had raged with unabated violence. No observation could be made, by reason of

the continued darkness, and officers and crew abandoned themselves to despair. In this extremity, St. Paul, who had spent long hours in prayer, gathered the affrighted crowd about him on the deck of the sinking ship, and said, in cheering tones, which rang out above the storm: "*There stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve*, saying: Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

It was God's will that His chosen servant should preach the gospel in Rome, and that purpose must stand.

The directions which St. Paul gave for the safety of the ship's company, were rigidly followed, and two hundred and sixty-six persons, Christians, Jews, and heathen, stood upon the beach. The small rocky island where they found themselves was the same which, during the sixteenth century, became the home of those heroic men, the Knights of Malta. The bay, which tradition has always pointed out as the scene of the shipwreck, is still known as "St. Paul's Bay."

The little island was not then crowded with a dense population, as in modern times, but much of it was waste land, and overgrown with wood. The inhabitants were of Phœnician origin, and St. Luke describes them as "barbarians," a term then applied to all who were not of Greek or Roman descent, no matter how refined they might be.

The people of Malta showed themselves most kind and hospitable.

The ancient capital of the island stood on high ground, five miles from the shore, and commanding a view of the bay into which the treacherous currents had borne

the sinking ship. No doubt, when the townspeople discovered through the hazy atmosphere of that October morning, a large vessel drifting into the harbor, they hastened to the shore, to render what help they could.

The condition of the shipwrecked men was dismal in the extreme. The wheat which formed so considerable a part of the cargo of the vessel, had been thrown overboard to lighten her, and the voyagers had only escaped with their lives. The people of the island did what they could for them, and a cheerful fire soon blazed in a sheltered nook, affording no little comfort, until Publius, the governor, could make more adequate arrangements for them.

Meanwhile, a special instance of God's watchful care over His servants, introduced St. Paul to the notice of the pagan islanders, and disposed them to listen with attention to his words. Never thinking himself too good to engage in the humblest occupation, when occasion required, he had been helping his companions gather fuel for the fire, and had cast a bundle of sticks upon it, when a viper came forth out of the heat, and fastened its poisonous fangs on his hand. The simple islanders at once concluded that the apostle was some wretched murderer, whom, though he had escaped death by shipwreck, divine vengeance still pursued. He shook off the venomous reptile, and when the beholders saw that no harm came to him, they regarded him as one of the immortal gods.

The Saviour's promise made to the apostles, was thus fulfilled: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (St. Mark xvi. 18).

We may suppose that St. Paul shook off the loathsome

creature passionately from his hand, even as we should shrink with horror from the contaminating touch of that old serpent, the devil, and with a loathing of sin in our members, lose no time in casting it away.

His claims to be a servant of the Most High God being thus signally proclaimed, the brief period of his sojourn in the island was devoted to his holy work. The many miracles which he wrought, deepened the impression for good which had already been made. The first which is recorded was the healing of the father of Publius, the governor of the island, whose kind reception of the strangers has already been mentioned. A report of this marvellous recovery spread through the island, and other sufferers were restored by the apostle's healing touch. Thus the good Lord enabled him, without silver or gold, to repay the attention which the generous islanders had so freely bestowed.

Moreover, at the end of three months, when Julius, the Roman centurion, considered it safe to trust the sea, and had secured passage for his soldiers and prisoners in another corn-ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, the inhabitants supplied them with every thing necessary for their comfort.

History records that many of them had been converted to Christianity, by St. Paul's preaching, and that he organized a church among them. To the seed thus providentially scattered may be traced eighteen centuries of Christianity in the island.

Might we not all thus learn to take advantage of an apparently accidental detention in any strange place, and turn it into the occasion of usefulness?

Carlyle remarks of his friend John Sterling, when,

with his soul aglow with holy zeal: "He had charged himself to make the apostle Paul his model. It would be no longer from Jerusalem to Damascus, to Arabia, to Derbe, Lystra, Ephesus, that he would travel; but each house of his appointed parish would be to him what each of those great cities were, a place where he would bend his whole being, and spend his heart for the conversion, purification, elevation of those under his influence."

Every Christian man and woman should remember that our heavenly Master expects all of us to be missionaries. The more faithful we are in the discharge of our sacred obligations, the greater our happiness and peace. Other Christians were on board the storm-tossed vessel, but to none except the apostle Paul did the angel say: "Fear not!" Why so? Because it is the will of Christ to bestow His richest consolations on His most devoted servants. In peculiar trials, they have peculiar mercies.

St. Paul was not left to the chance of being able to call to mind some gracious promise of deliverance which God had made to His people, but a special comforter was sent to him from heaven; "*There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve*, saying: Fear not!"

He did not question with himself whether this was not all a dream. He took God at His word: "I believe God," he says, "that it shall be even as it was told me."

He considered himself as belonging to God. Having made up his mind, once for all, whom he ought to serve,—he was no waverer—St. Paul did not say, in tones of timidity and hesitation: "I hope I belong to God." There

is unspeakable calmness and simplicity in his unreserved acknowledgment that he did belong to Him.

Dear friends, let us ask ourselves the question, whether we belong to God, and, whether or not we are serving Him. Indecision and half-heartedness will not do. Luke-warmness and formalism are worthless.

A hollow-hearted religion is an insult to the Most High, and it would not satisfy ourselves. When, however, we have made our peace with God, through Christ, we learn to exult, like holy Paul, in our heavenly relationship and our honorable and happy service.

"What different beings we become! Not our own, but God's! We can do no common, no trifling thing. All we engage in is elevated, glorified, sanctified! Repeating to ourselves, 'the God whose I am, and whom I serve,' we press forward in our course, nerved for duty and for trial" (Bonar).

Thousands can say: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, in whom I believe and trust;" but can they add—each one speaking for himself,—“and whom I serve”? If you are serving Him, you are daily preaching to the world by your example, and by gracious words of warning and encouragement spoken in due season.

Do you tell me, by way of excuse for accomplishing so little for the Master, that St. Paul was a very remarkable man, and that it would be simply absurd for you to try to do such things as he did? Yes! he was a very remarkable man; once remarkably cruel, before God had changed his heart; and then, remarkably zealous and devoted.

When God sent him forth to preach, it was not to speak high-sounding words, but to accomplish a very

wonderful thing. Do you ask what? "I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light!"

God does not say to him: "Go and try your hand at this business, and see whether you can open their eyes or not," but, simply and positively, "Go and do it."

The apostle obeyed, and He who gave him the command, gave him also the power. He did open the eyes of the spiritually blind; he did turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

No Christian is serving the Lord, who, in his own appointed sphere in life, is not trying to do likewise.

SERMON LXI.

FAMILY RELIGION.

(Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife.”—I COR. vii. 16.

Two proverbs are often quoted concerning the most sacred covenant which can bind mortals to each other. One is, “Marriage is a lottery;” the other, that “Matches are made in heaven.”

With these wise sayings on their lips, multitudes fix their destiny for life, as if a mere matter of sport, or something quite within the dominion of chance. The beautiful chant sung in the Temple service of the Jews: “God setteth the solitary in families” (Ps. lxxviii. 6), constantly reminded them of the Divine institution of marriage, and hedged it about with sacred associations.

The Christian Church has always borne her emphatic testimony to all who were about to enter into this “holy state,” that it should be done “reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.”

Congeniality of sentiment, and a careful consideration of the common duties, difficulties, and cares, which are sure to be met with, ought never to be lost sight of in making such important arrangements. People who act merely from the impulse of the moment, from some freak of fancy, or in the dreamy spirit of romance, can hardly escape trouble in after life.

I do not say that such mistakes can never be corrected. It would be absurd to deny that some, who in thoughtless haste, have assumed the holy vows of marriage, have afterwards by mutual forbearance, and by acts of courtesy and kindness, done much towards healing difficulties, and laying a solid foundation for domestic happiness.

Such a result is especially to be hoped for, when one of the parties is guided by religious principles. Indeed it is a case of this kind, to which St. Paul refers in the text: "*What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*"

The end to be gained was so much to be wished for, that the apostle would have a Christian husband or wife live even with a heathen partner, in hopes that it might, in course of time, be brought about. Many a wife has thus been the means of saving her husband, and many a husband has been the salvation of the wife.

There is no earthly relationship which has so much power to ennoble and exalt.

As to the means by which the beneficent work of bringing an unbelieving husband or wife to a better mind, I would say in few words, that it can never be done by a harsh, complaining temper, but by gentleness and love.

It must be religion by example. Prayer will be a powerful help. When a husband is deaf to the entreaty and remonstrance, God can hear. When a husband is unreasonable or morose, God is kind and gracious. The gentleness of woman may sometimes seem to be carried to the extreme of compliant weakness, but this very weakness will add to her strength.

An unreasonable, selfish husband once boasted of the

good temper of his wife, and a wager was laid that she would rise at midnight at his request, and without a murmur, prepare a supper for the jovial company. It was put to the test, and the husband won the wager.

One of the company who was greatly surprised at the result, said to the amiable woman: "As you are a devoted Christian, and can not approve of our conduct, give me leave to ask what can possibly induce you to behave with so much kindness to us?" "When I married," she answered, "my husband and myself were both equally worldly, but it has pleased God to open my eyes to the truth. He continues as he was. I am most unhappy about him. If he should die as he is, he will certainly be lost. I think it my duty therefore, to make his present life as comfortable as I can." The gay company sat in silence until the husband asked with a tremulous voice, "Do you really think, my dear, that I shall be forever miserable if I keep on as I am? I thank you for warning me. By God's help I will change my life from this hour." He did better than promise. The husband kept his word.

For those who are unsettled in life, there can be no question that St. Paul's rule is the safest and best. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. vi. 14).

When Philip Henry, the English non-conformist, sought the hand of the only daughter of Mr. Matthews, a wealthy landowner of Shropshire, the purse-proud father answered: "Mr. Henry is certainly a gentleman, and a good preacher, but I don't know where he came from."

"True," answered the spirited daughter, "but I know where he is going, and I should like to go with him!"

The father's opposition ceased, and the marriage took place. Long years afterwards, Philip Henry thus wrote in his private journal: "April 26, 1680. This day we have been married twenty years, in which time we have received of the Lord twenty thousand mercies. To God be glory."

His usual compliment to his newly-married friends was this: "Others wish you all happiness; I wish you all holiness, and then there is no doubt you will have all happiness."

The question of St. Paul, in the text, brings before us, very plainly, the importance of family religion.

The head of every household should consider all beneath his roof as entrusted to his care, to be trained up for eternal blessedness. It was said by the Almighty One Himself with special approbation concerning faithful Abraham: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. xviii. 19).

No graver mistake can possibly be made, than to attempt to separate religion from our every-day life. It should go with us into our business and our pleasures, and influence us in all we do.

Socrates is said to have brought down philosophy from the clouds, to dwell with men; but it is much more true to say of our blessed Lord, that He came into this world as a man, not only to be the substitute and the sacrifice for sinners, but to make religion daily and domestic.

Parental obligation can not be shaken off from the shoulders where it properly belongs, by transferring children to the care of Sunday-school teachers, and by bringing them regularly to church. This is but a part of a parent's duty. Religion should be one of the familiar

themes at home, and then the child will never be ashamed of having a soul whose eternal interests must be looked after, and a Father in heaven, who is to be loved and honored. No church-man has done justice by his children, who has not taught them the Catechism.

"The country parson," says saintly George Herbert, "values catechism highly. He useth and preferreth the ordinary Church Catechism."

"Parts of it are level to the comprehension of the simplest child. Parts of it, if investigated, would task the loftiest reach of the most intellectual man; places in it, as an ancient (Gregory the Great) writes of sacred Scripture, where every lamb may wade, other places where an elephant must swim" (Bishop Doane).

People often lament that their children are growing up without any sense of religious obligation; giddy, self-willed, and reckless. In most cases, such complaints are made by those who have neglected to keep up the outward forms of family religion.

Without any labored argument to establish the duty and importance of family prayer, let me rather ask what household living unmindful of it, has not felt now and then, at least, the urgent need of a family altar?

A son or daughter is about to go from home on a dangerous journey; some member of the family may be dangerously sick; a sudden crash of temporal fortunes may have left the whole domestic circle in confusion and dismay; a contagious disease may be rapidly spreading from house to house; under circumstances such as these, what a relief to every aching heart to gather about the family altar, and with united voice, to cry unto Him who is so ready and so able to help!

In a family where the daily morning and evening worship is neglected, such emergencies take parents and children by surprise, and there is no one who feels called upon to suggest it. Here, then, is a household, Christian in name, actually casting away the strength and comfort which our holy religion is intended to supply. The father or the mother will be held accountable for the neglect.

A crotchety inmate of a family, may make it awkward and embarrassing for the head of the household to conduct the devotions, especially if such brother or cousin be disposed to treat the arrangement with indifference or contempt; but even such unfavorable circumstances do not change the binding obligation to remember God in the united voice of prayer and thanksgiving.

Another of those formal acts by which the spirit of religion is kept alive in the family, is that of asking a blessing before meals.

Our blessed Lord set us an example in this matter; and St. Paul, even amidst the terror of the terrible storm which so nearly proved the destruction of the ship, would not partake of his hurried meal, until he had said grace, as usual. His own duty as a Christian was not forgotten, although hardly one out of the two hundred and seventy-three on board sympathized with him.

When the king of the Friendly Islands gave up idolatry and became a Christian, he was invited on board a British ship to dine with the officers. All were seated at table, and the guest was abundantly supplied with food, but to the surprise of his hosts, he declined to eat. They asked why, when he answered in his simplicity, that he was "waiting for the blessing."

The well-deserved rebuke was not lost upon the officers, and I have told it now, with the hope that it may remind some Christian household of a neglected duty.

The relations of civil and social life are manifold, and in each, and in all of them, it becomes us to manifest a real interest for the salvation of others.

Not only may the unbelieving husband be brought back to God by the devoted Christian wife, and the frivolous wife be led to think of things eternal by the godly life of the husband, but children may grow up devoted disciples of Christ Jesus, encouraged and lured onward by the example of religious parents. Such results, however, can never be accomplished, unless Christians strive to be sincere and devoted. If the man whose whole soul is alive when he talks to you of a chance for a good investment, or the woman who is actually eloquent, when she describes the latest style of spring bonnets, is cold and languid when religion is referred to, would the advice of such a lukewarm Christian man or woman be likely to touch your heart?

On the other hand, the example and the prayers of the humblest Christian (if he be indeed God's child) are never lost.

A poor woman died leaving her little boy very poor and friendless. He had often heard her pray for him, but although he grew up to be a prosperous man, he cared only for the perishing things of earth.

After his mother had been dead twenty years, he arranged to remove her remains from their obscure grave, to his own handsome lot in the cemetery. As he saw the coffin let down to its last resting place, he thought of the many prayers his dear mother had offered for him,

and wondered they never had been answered. His stony, worldly heart was softened; the Holy Spirit of God strove with him anew; he yielded himself to God, and now rejoices in His salvation. O beloved, let us all be preachers in our daily lives; preachers in our families; preachers to our neighbors and friends; that even from our mouldering dust, good may come forth to animate and bless!

SERMON LXII.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH A CONTINUATION OF THE JEWISH.

(Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

“After this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof; and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things.”—ACTS xv. 16, 17.

ST. JAMES, the bishop of Jerusalem, quotes these words in his speech before the council of the Church, held in that city. He produced this scriptural proof, to show the belief of the prophets concerning the future condition of the Church. It would be easy to refer to many passages of the same import, which speak very distinctly of a kingdom, a conquest, a law, and a ritual, to be fulfilled under the gospel dispensation (Isa. xxxvii. 31; Jer. xxxi. 31–33; xxxiii. 14–18; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; and Zech. viii. 3, etc.).

It is a mistake to suppose that every thing belonging to the old system was to be done away with, by the coming of our Lord. People sometimes fancy that they are saying very severe things against the rites and ceremonies of the Church, when they contemptuously speak of them as only “the remains of Judaism”! The truth is, the Christian Church is a continuation of the Jewish; the same Church, with new and greater privileges. Indeed,

the glorious promises for the fulfilment of which the Israelites so anxiously wait, will only be realized, when they recognize in Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected Messiah, and, by the appointed door of entrance, take refuge in His kingdom. Here they will find their old Church, once confining its blessings to one nation, with open doors, inviting the whole world to enter.

Those who are not disposed to have their belief hampered in any way, are accustomed to excuse their vagaries in religion by the gratuitous assumption that the New Testament has enjoined no particular form of church government, or ceremonies for public worship. They argue thus loosely because they have failed to observe that the Jewish and Christian Churches are not altogether distinct and separate, but that the one is really a continuation of the other. Why should the Old Testament be used in the Christian Church, if all the forms and ceremonials of the former dispensation are done away with forever? Were they not (in a certain sense) appointed once for all; not dead letters even now, but illustrated and spiritualized by the gospel?

One division in the Temple at Jerusalem was called "The Court of the Gentiles." We will imagine ourselves standing in the midst of this enclosure, and witnessing the services of that holy place. A pagan, as he gazed at the magnificent Temple, resplendent with silver and gold, and painting and tapestry, and calculated from its size and adornments to impress one with awe, and contrasted it with the little grove, and the rude altar where his own idol was worshipped, would be disposed to say: "Why this lavish expense? Could not Jehovah be worshipped quite as devoutly in a far less costly temple?"

The Church of Christ, now standing in the room of the Jewish, does its best to imitate the glories of that Temple, which Solomon studied and toiled to build. And are not the words which I have put into the mouth of the Gentile stranger, daily repeated now?

Let us go back again to our place of observation, in the outer court of the Temple. The hour for the daily morning sacrifice has come. The ministers of God, divided by His direction into three distinct grades, of high priest, priest, and Levite, appear before the altar. No other men, of all the righteous souls of Israel, are authorized to do their work.

In the Christian Church, the same divinely appointed ministry, in its three orders of bishop, priest, and deacon, offer the appointed sacrifice of prayer and praise, and administer the Blessed Sacraments. These men have been called and ordained of God, as Aaron was (Heb. v. 4).

One of the group of strangers, among whom we are supposing ourselves to stand, might be struck by the peculiar vestments of the priests, and ask why these were used. An intelligent Hebrew would at once refer him to the thirty-ninth chapter of the book of Leviticus, as proof that God had given very minute instructions concerning these priestly garments. Such matters, therefore, can not be absurd trifles. The robes of the high priest were exceeding rich, while those of the priests and Levites were plain white linen surplices, or ephods (v. 27).

Every reason of expediency and reverence required that appropriate vestments should be used by the ministers of the Christian Church; and, accordingly, it is not surprising that this custom has always and everywhere prevailed.

It would also be noticed, that the Temple service was a regular established form, only varied to suit the several fasts and feasts. Sacrifices were offered, in a prescribed way. Lessons from the Law and the Prophets were read; the Psalter was recited responsively; written prayers were said; and appropriate services provided for weddings and burials.

Has not the Christian Church, in all ages, and among every nation, been wise in holding fast to "the form of sound words" left as a legacy from apostolic days?

The Gentile who has been observing all these peculiarities of the Temple service at Jerusalem, would not be surprised to notice that the worshippers stood up during the singing, and kneeled upon their knees in prayer. Pagans had always been reverent enough to do that much.

"St. John has lifted the veil from the upper sanctuary, and shows us four and twenty elders falling down before God, and the universe of angels casting their wings in the dust, and falling on their faces around Him, as they present the vials with the prayer of the saints. How amazing the descent from such a scene into the midst of a company of mortals, separated at a distance measureless from the favor and patience of God, against whom heaven's gates were once hopelessly shut; and who see the Son of God Himself upon His knees in awful vigils for their safety, yet coolly sitting down when they praise or pray!" (Mines.)

Again we return to the outer court of the Jewish Temple. Parents are seen bringing their infant children, to present them to the Lord, and have them engrafted into the body of His Church, by the divinely appointed rite.

Has the Christian Church barred her gates against

those little ones, which the Jewish Church, with more restricted privileges, was always glad to welcome?

Nay! verily: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," our blessed Saviour said, and His bride, the Church, has always taken Him at His word, and brought little children to His loving arms.

"Christian, thou who believest in the atonement of sins through faith in Christ after repentance, is not this the state in which thou professest to be, this state of a little child? and is it not because of this, that thou comest forward? If this were not thy state, wouldest thou come to His holy baptism?" (Adam's "Mercy to Babes.")

A company of young people, of both sexes, and from twelve to fourteen years old, are now seen going up to receive the blessing of the high priest. Having "learned the law, and the explication thereof, and their daily prayers," they are signifying, by this public confession, in the presence of the whole congregation, that they take upon themselves the responsibility which their parents have hitherto borne.

You recognize in this beautiful custom, our Christian rite of Confirmation, which every apostolic branch of the Church has been most careful to preserve.

The Passover, in which bread and wine were blessed, and reverently received, was not this a foreshadowing of the Holy Communion? The paschal feast was a type of Christ's atoning death. The type has been fulfilled; but there is left in its place another ordinance, the Lord's Supper.

The great festivals and fasts of the Jewish Church, appear, once more, in Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, and in our Lenten season.

Could all these points of resemblance between two religious systems, so commonly regarded as entirely distinct, have been arranged by blind chance?

Must not the new system have been carefully moulded and modelled after the old? Judaism and Christianity are both from God. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than that we should find a marked resemblance between them.

Promises once made to the Jews, are now in course of fulfilment among Christians. How could this be so, unless they can be regarded as one continuous stream of Divine mercy, conveyed to man through the appointed channels of God's grace? This view of the matter brings God much nearer to us. He who was the King of Israel is our ruler and guide. He, whose glorious presence dwelt between the wings of the cherubim, is present with us also.

The psalms of the sweet singer of Israel, are "a vase of perfume broken on the steps of the Temple, shedding its odor to all humanity" (Lamartine).

"Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God" (Psalm lxxxvii. 3). "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i. e.*, all, one by one), was born in her" (v. 5).

All, whether far or near, shall be "born in her," and thus become children of God, and heirs of His everlasting kingdom.

In reading such glorious predictions as that contained in the text, we need not look forward to the dim and distant future, a time which we may never live to behold. Already, day by day, and hour by hour, the gracious promise is having its accomplishment. *"After this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is*

fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof; and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things."

The living Redeemer has come to men, and all the kindreds of the nations are gathering about the standard of His cross.

And why is it that the word of the Lord fails to have "free course" and to be glorified? It is because so many who have been baptized into the death of Christ forget that "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again" (II Cor. v. 15).

We can not ask ourselves too soon, how the case stands with us.

SERMON LXIII.

THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

(All Saints.)

“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”—ST. MATT. xxii.,
part of 32d verse.

ALL the departed saints, whose names are not mentioned in the Church calendar, are commemorated to-day, and, hence, there is not one of us who has not a special interest in its observance.

In some small parishes, where the deaths are not numerous, it is customary for the clergyman to read the names of those who have died during the year past, and then, the beautiful fitness of the language of the communion office is better appreciated; in which we bless God's holy name “for all Christ's servants departed this life in His faith and fear.”

Here, the practice is, to make a brief pause, after this clause of the prayer, that they who are mourning the loss of friends, may call them distinctly to remembrance, and realize, in its preciousness, the doctrine of the “communion of saints.”

“It should be the Christian's delight, on this day, to reflect, as he is moved by the appointed Scriptures, on the graces and virtues which have been exhibited by that goodly fellowship of the saints who, in all ages,

have honored God in their lives, and glorified Him in their deaths; he should pray for grace to follow them "in all virtuous and godly living"; he should meditate on the glorious rest that remains for the people of God, on which they have entered; and earnestly seek that grace whereby, after a short further time of trial, he may be united with the faithful departed, in the services of the Church triumphant" (Hook's Church Dictionary).

In this temper of mind and heart, I trust that we are bearing our part in these solemn services to-day.

In His argument with the Sadducees, who denied that there was any resurrection, and who made mock at the idea of a future state, our blessed Lord said to them, "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? *God is not a God of the dead, but of the living.*"

All this took place at the burning bush (Ex. iii. 6-15). The three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been dead for hundreds of years; and yet the Almighty One still claims to be their God. It is worse than absurd to say that He reigns over those who have ceased to exist; and hence they must still be alive. St. Luke adds, "all live unto Him" (xx. 38).

If then, we are heirs of the glorious hopes of the gospel, it becomes us to be living as candidates of heaven, and the children of the resurrection.

The doctrine of a future life of blessedness is full of comfort to the bereaved: "It clothes the grave with flowers, and wreathes the tomb with unfading laurel. The sepulchre shines with a light brighter than the sun,

and death grows fair, as we say, in full assurance of faith, 'I know that my brother shall rise again!'"

Aye! the departed, whom we speak of as dead, are really alive, alive in a higher and truer sense than we are; for "*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*"!

Through Christ Jesus, the power of death has been destroyed, and we may all come off more than conquerors, through Him who hath loved us.

"The graves of all His saints He bless'd,
When in the grave He lay;
And, rising thence, their hopes He raised,
To everlasting day."

The saints of old, the best and holiest of them, were, by nature, even such as we are. We have the same God, and Saviour, and Holy Spirit; the same Bible, the same Church, the same sacraments, the same means of grace, to comfort and help us.

Our lives may be made as conformable to God's will, our deaths as peaceful, our rest in Christ Jesus as assured as theirs.

On this festival of All Saints, a great multitude of shining ones pass before our minds' eye, and we ask, with the elder in the Apocalypse: "Who are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?"

The answer is promptly returned: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb."

"God is not the God of the dead," my friends, and we need no longer grieve for the departed, as though they slumbered in the dark, cold grave.

All of them, from the least to the greatest, are "alive unto God," already happy, in Paradise, up to the full measure of their capacities; conscious, intelligent, rejoicing.

Yet a little while, and God will accomplish the number of His elect, and we, too, shall be gathered to our fathers.

In the Holy Communion to-day, let us renew our vows of self-consecration, and earnestly and devoutly pray, that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also may appear with Him, in glory."

SERMON LXIV.

SLANDER.

(Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.)

"If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution."—EXODUS xxii. 6.

A MAN of overweening curiosity who looked down his neighbor's chimney to see what he was cooking for supper, not only failed to find out what he desired to know, but was nearly blinded by the smoke.

The outside world is perpetually making its ungenerous and unjust remarks concerning "Church members," magnifying their short-comings, and rejoicing in their fall.

Somebody has conveyed a well-deserved rebuke to such unamiable people, who said, "If we would sit down by our neighbor's fire occasionally, instead of looking down his chimney, we would see many good points in his character that smoke will certainly obscure."

The direction from the law of Moses which has been chosen for the text will be found to have a direct bearing on some points of every-day life among ourselves.

The Arabs who inhabit the rich valley of the Jordan do not hesitate to put any one to death who is discovered to have been even the innocent cause of setting fire to the grass. The most abandoned would scorn to be guilty of burning the harvest-field of his bitterest enemy.

The importance of the Mosaic law on the subject can only be appreciated when we remember that wheat was always left unreaped until it had become dry as tinder, and that, without division fences to separate the land of different owners, a fire catching in any part of the vast field would endanger the whole crop.

The same rule, in a spiritual sense, is applicable to our own day.

A Sunday-school teacher who had been explaining to his class some of the Old Testament directions which seem to us out of date, asked whether they could refer to any part of the law of Moses which reminded them of his rule concerning the spreading fire. There was a pause, then some guessing quite wide of the mark, and then two bright eyes sparkled, while their sprightly owner said: "If you please, I think it is in Exodus (xxiii. 1), 'Thou shalt not raise a false report.'"

"True," answered the teacher, "and now tell me why the raising of a false report is like the kindling of the spreading fire?"

To this question a variety of very correct answers were given. One scholar said, "Because it was often kindled through carelessness;" another, "Because it had such a trifling beginning;" a third, "Because it spread so quickly;" a fourth, "Because it does so much harm;" and a fifth, "Because when it once begins to spread, there is no chance of stopping it."

St. Austin wrote these suggestive words upon his dining-table: "He that loveth by ill speech to gnaw the life of those who are absent, let him know himself unworthy to sit at this table; or that this table is unfit for him."

How dumb many dinner parties would be, should such a rule be rigidly enforced!

Our good English word "gossip" conveys a very vivid impression to those who have suffered from the exercise of the tattling, unscrupulous disposition which it stands for.

Even Christian men and women do their full share in the circulation of damaging, and often doubtful, reports. It is not important that they should be true; they need only be startling or amusing.

You may relate a circumstance very correctly yourself, but can never be sure that it will not be distorted and changed by the one who hears it from you. Something will be dropped out, or something will be unconsciously added, which will give a different color to the whole proceeding. You fancy that you are not responsible for what others may make of your story, but here you are grievously mistaken. It is true that in your version of it you carefully guarded your statement with qualifications and explanations; but you should have known enough of human nature to feel sure that by the time the report had been repeated once or twice more, these qualifications and explanations would be left out.

One curious device by which mischief-makers contrive to indulge their habitual weakness and yet (as they imagine) escape the charge of telling secrets is by withholding names.

They set out on this plan, but presently through inadvertence a single name slips out, or it is found so tedious to continue a narrative which is encumbered with circumlocution, that with solemn protestations that they had not intended to lift the veil of mystery, the names of the actors are disclosed.

Another extremely disagreeable shape which mischief-making often assumes is the disposition to point out slight defects in the characters of good people. Tell them of somebody whose works of mercy are the subject of general commendation, and they seek to lessen your admiration by reminding you that this benevolent person has exceedingly brusque and disagreeable manners, or by meanly insinuating that his good deeds are prompted by the desire of winning popular applause.

Allowing that this unhappy disposition to depreciate the worth of others does not sink so low as to come under the head of lying and slander, yet the effect of it is exceedingly deplorable. It gradually leads people to believe that there is no one in the world whom it is safe to trust, or who is deserving of admiration. Gratitude for favors received is chilled, and reverence for purity and goodness vanishes away.

"Take a large sheet of paper and a pen, and write out a list of all the persons you dislike, adding a brief statement of the reasons why you dislike each of them. Having written accordingly, ask yourself this question: Am I doing well to be angry with these persons? Have they given me offence to justify this dislike? And now listen to this prophecy. You will be obliged to confess that you have not. You will feel ashamed of your dislike for them. You will resolve to cease disliking them" (Boyd's "Autumn Holidays").

It is not a very flattering title which you bestow upon a man when you call him an incendiary; but there can be no question that many who hold their heads high in society are really very destructive incendiaries.

"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

says St. James (iii. 5); and how true it is! The careless man who drops the end of a cigar near a few dry straws, has no idea that this thoughtless act will lead to incalculable mischief; but the lighted straws quickly spread to other combustible things, until the devouring flames are raging through wheat fields and woods, with a fury which it seems impossible to check.

The utterance of evil reports, great or small, may well be likened to playing with fire. A single spark may set a whole town in a blaze. It does not alter the case that no malicious motive has prompted the incendiary. The indelible scorch on the business integrity of the merchant, or upon the good name of an innocent man or woman, may not be charged to the account of wilful malignity, but the disfiguring scorch is there; burned in for life. Nobody may believe the rumor; nevertheless mischief has been done; mischief which will remain.

There are so many ways of kindling a flame by the poisonous breath of slander, that only a few of them can now be referred to.

I. Perverting one's words or actions is an every-day occurrence.

When our blessed Lord said to the Pharisees, with reference to His approaching death, and probably pointing to His own body as He spoke: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (St. John ii. 19), His implacable enemies chose to take the words in their literal sense, and quoted them against Him at His mock trial.

A witness is responsible, if not for his understanding of the words which he repeats, yet he ought to be held accountable for the accuracy of his quotation. A witness from hearsay, who claims to have heard a certain state-

ment, or an accuser who has not accurately heard what he reports, must also be regarded as a false witness.

II. Another way by which flames are often kindled, to the damage of one's good name, is the habit of jumping to conclusions without sufficient evidence to sustain them.

While Wilberforce occupied his prominent place in the British parliament he was exceedingly annoyed by finding himself chronicled in opposition papers as "St. Wilberforce."

"He was lately seen," said the slanderous print, "walking up and down in the pump-room at Bath, reading his prayers, like his predecessors of old, who prayed at the corners of the streets to be seen of men!"

Mr. Wilberforce, who was not more distinguished for his brilliant mental gifts than for his unobtrusive goodness, remarked upon this wanton falsehood: "As there is generally some slight circumstance which perverseness turns into a charge or reproach, I began to reflect, and I soon found the occasion of the calumny. I was walking in the pump-room, in conversation with a friend; a passage from Horace was quoted, the accuracy of which was questioned, and as I had a copy of the Latin poet in my pocket, I took it out and read the words. This was the plain 'bit of wire' which factious malignity sharpened into a pin to pierce my reputation."

It is pitiful to think how many ugly pins have been fashioned out of smaller bits of wire than that!

III. The cruel purposes of slander may also be accomplished by sly insinuations and crafty questions calculated to arouse serious and damaging suspicions.

When any one spoke evil of another in the presence of Peter the Great, he would promptly stop him and say,

"Well, no; but has he not got a bright side? Come, tell me what good you know of him. It is easy to splash mud; but I would rather help a man to keep his coat clean!"

There are many who set up higher claims to saintliness than the Czar of Russia, who might well learn a lesson from him.

IV. Once more: Slander is encouraged by those who patiently listen to it, and who prompt the cruel person to vent his venom on the innocent.

Half the quarrels in families, and more than half the estrangements among friends might be avoided, if we would persistently refuse to listen to the words of the tale-bearer. If we are deaf, the slanderer would speedily become dumb.

Let no one venture to say that the points which have been mentioned are mere trifles; and that imprudent people can go on and make smart and cutting speeches about others, and that no harm will follow. The text teaches us better: "He that kindleth the fire shall surely make restitution." It may not always be in this world, but it certainly will be in the next.

The deeply-wronged sufferer can afford to leave the settlement of his case to God.

A prisoner during his trial smiled while his accusers testified against him. On being asked why he was so unconcerned he said: "It is no matter what my accusers say, so long as the judge says nothing." It is no matter what the world says, so long as God finds no fault in us.

SERMON LXV.

CHILDREN TRAINED IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO.

(Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.)

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”—PROVERBS xxii. 6.

PROFESSOR WEBSTER, who was hung for the murder of Dr. Parkman, in Boston, confessed his crime, but made this very lame apology for it. “I am irritable and passionate; a quick-handed and brisk violence of temper have been the besetting sins of my life. I was an only child, much indulged, and have never acquired the control over my temper, as I ought to have acquired early; and the consequence is all this.” “All this!” The death-sentence; the dungeon; the gallows; the everlasting disgrace. Crime and punishment are the terrible Nemesis of parental neglect. The moral training of the young, in accordance with the Divine Law, is the only education which is deserving of the name. It is for this reason that Solomon addresses himself to parents and teachers, saying very emphatically, “Train up a child in the way he should go,” adding, as an encouragement in so trying a task, “when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

The hopes of two generations at least, perhaps of many, depend upon the observance of this rule. At the

lirth of every child, an existence begins, which is to last throughout eternity. No power of men, nor demons, can crush it out. Disease and death may shorten the period of its earthly sojourn, but the soul of that being will live on forever. The happiness or the misery of this immortal being depends upon the training. Two ways lie before him; the way he would go, if left to himself, downward and headlong to ruin; and the way in which he should go, the pathway to heaven.

The sooner this training begins, the easier for those whose business it is, and the more satisfactory the results.

The work is often begun too late; it can never begin too soon. The soil of the heart must be sown with good seed, if we wish to keep out the tares.

When Solomon advises parents to "train up a child in the way he should go," his words imply a great deal. To talk to him, in a general way, about religion, is one thing; to train him up to the practice of it, is another.

The Bible system of education regards children not only as intellectual, but as responsible and immortal beings. Head and heart are both to be improved.

In order to efficient training, a rule is needed to point out the way, and a rigid authority to oblige one to walk therein. "A thread extended in the air between two points is a sufficient rule for those who need nothing but a rule, and by such a line, accordingly, the builder rears his wall; but an extended thread, pointing out the boundary between your garden and your neighbors, is not sufficient when children and ripe fruit are brought in contact. Besides a mark to let them see where their neighbor's property is, a wall is needed to keep them out of it. In the Scriptures, received and revered as the inspired

word of God for the whole duty of man, we have at once a conspicuous rule, and a supreme authority" (Arnot).

The great work of training up the child for its life in this world and in the next, begins at baptism in infancy, and is carried on, as the mind becomes familiar with the words of faith and sound doctrine, in the Catechism.

The catechizing of children is positively enjoined by God (Deut. vi. 7, Eph. vi. 4, etc.), and was always practiced by His people (Gen. xviii. 19; I Chron. xxviii. 9; II Tim. i. 5).

Another step is gained when, by parental and pastoral care, the Holy Bible is judiciously presented to the opening mind.

"I do verily believe," says Richard Baxter, in his "Saints' Rest," "that if parents did their duty as they ought, the word publicly preached would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the Church, but only without the Church, among infidels."

I need hardly remind you that the child who is "trained up in the way he should go," will be brought, in due time, to confirmation, and will seek to grow in grace by regular and devout attendance upon the Supper of the Lord.

Such, in brief, is the Bible method of education—education in its best and highest sense. Alas! how many unwise departures from it! Some over-fond and foolish parents make appeals to the appetite, or the selfishness of their children, instead of acting upon principle. Some excite their pride; some coax and flatter; some degrade themselves by offering bribes for behaving well. Some scold and chastise, when boiling over with ungoverned passion. There are few more pitiable sights, so far as

children are concerned, than when a doting mother allows a little child to disobey her positive commands, not only without punishment, but even without reproof.

Those who favor modern theories of education, may cry out against this, as needless severity, but so long as we have the warrant of God's word, we can not doubt that we are only insisting upon imperative duties (Prov. xiii. 24). The rod of discipline is employed by our Heavenly Father, to subdue our stubborn wills, and this is a plain evidence of His affection for us.

To "train up a child in the way he should go," implies not only that he has been taught to yield to a parent's command a cheerful and unquestioning obedience, but that he has also been made to cultivate the habit of self-direction.

The great purpose of parental authority and discipline is to qualify the young to govern themselves. A boy may behave very properly so long as he has his father or mother at hand, to jog his memory, and to put him on his guard; but unless he is learning, little by little, to depend upon himself, there is a mere show of education, without the reality. When exposed, as he surely will be, to the snares of temptation; when brought in contact with the designing and the depraved; when called upon to decide grave questions for himself, how helpless this youth will find himself to be!

In "training up" a child aright, he must also be early taught to speak the truth. It is wonderful how soon a disposition to lie is discovered in the young. The Psalmist can hardly be charged with exaggeration when he says: "As soon as they are born, they go astray, and speak lies" (Ps. lviii. 3).

There was a law among the Persians that if any one was convicted of falsehood three times, he should, under penalty of death, never speak a word again. Should such a rule be enforced, in our day, a large proportion of our fellow-citizens would suddenly become dumb. The most abandoned of men have traced back their wretched career to its early and unnoticed beginning in a childish falsehood. "Sins grow like grapes, close, but in clusters. We usually say, He that will swear will lie, and he that will lie will steal, and he that will do all these will do any thing" (Bp. Henshaw).

The conscientious parent who has deeply imprinted on the heart of his child a love of truth, has done much towards making him a good and useful member of society.

Again: It may be safely said that no child is properly trained up, who has not been taught habits of industry. These are alike important to rich and poor, and no one can be happy without them.

Count Caylus, the celebrated French antiquary, spent much time in engraving the plates which illustrate his valuable works. When asked why he labored so hard at such a mere mechanical occupation, he answered, "I engrave, lest I should hang myself!"

Idleness is a constant source of wretchedness. It is the very nest and canker of the soul, and the devil's best seed-time. The ruin of most people dates from an idle hour.

In "training up a child in the way he should go," the rule of William of Wykeham, once Bishop of Winchester, is worth remembering: "Manners maketh man."

Burke strikes the same key-note when he says, "Manners are of more importance than laws. Upon them, in

a great measure, the laws depend. The law teaches us but here and there. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in. They give their whole form and color to our lives. According to their quality, they aid morals, they supply them, or they totally destroy them."

It is a matter of the greatest importance, therefore, to themselves and to the world, whether or not your sons and daughters are suffered to grow up with or without manners.

Again: No child has been trained up in the way he should go, whose affections have not been carefully cultivated. Home can never be what it was designed to be without love. "Love will do more than authority. Not blind, capricious, fitful affection, but affection guided by wisdom, sustained by fortitude, illumined by a prevailing cheerfulness, and nurtured by a genuine faith. The same influences which cement a household to each other's hearts, consecrate in their affections the roof under which they dwell. The love of God is the only adequate solvent for human selfishness. The sympathy of the Divine Comforter is the only sufficient balm for real sorrow" (Dr. H. A. Boardman).

Let parents be servants of God, and teach their sons and daughters to be so also, and all will be well. It would be easy to make Christians of the whole world, if children were but properly trained.

The work which fathers and mothers have to do is not easy, but it is blessed. Sometimes the reward of parental fidelity is immediate and enduring. Sometimes the heart-

broken parents go down to their graves in sorrow, because of the fruitlessness of their efforts. The promise of God, nevertheless, standeth sure. "The child may depart when he is young; but when he is old, in after years, smothered convictions will bring back the power of early impressions. The seeds of instruction will burst forth into life. The remembrance of his father's house brings the prodigal 'to himself'; and he comes home with tears in his eyes, and godly sorrow in his heart" (Bridges).

Let this be the encouragement of Christian parents to do their work well. Like all other important work, it can not be done by fits and starts. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," is God's own commandment on the subject, "and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. vi. 7).

It may be very kind in Christian people to provide aprons for rude savages in foreign lands, and dinners for hungry boot-blacks at home, but there is a duty which should come much closer to their hearts; the duty of training up their own sons and daughters, in the way they should go.

"Teach them diligently." O! Christian fathers and mothers, are you doing this? Do you know where your boy goes, almost every night after tea, when he hurries away, saying with an air of importance and swagger that he has an engagement?

Have you any idea what a demoralizing romance your innocent daughter keeps hid away in her private drawer, and reads with such absorbed attention on the sly?

A man was brought, not long ago, to a penitentiary

near this place, where he was enrolled among the convicts under an assumed name. His distracted mother heard where he was, and determined to visit him. As she was too poor to ride, she made the journey on foot. On reaching the prison, she did not at first recognize her son in his striped clothes and short hair, but when she did discover her once innocent boy in this hard-featured convict, she clasped him in her arms, and cried out in agony: "O my son, I am to blame for this! If I had only taught you to obey God, you never would have been here!"

Dear friends, may God help us all to apply the warning to ourselves!

SERMON LXVI.

THE TESTIMONY OF NINEVEH.

(Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity.)

“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.”—ST. MATTHEW xii., part of 41st verse.

TRADITIONS of the marvellous size and magnificence of Nineveh were common among all the nations of antiquity. It was even greater than Babylon.

Before the excavations of the last few years, the ruins which marked what was supposed to be the site of Nineveh, consisted of little more than shapeless heaps of earth and rubbish. Here and there were traces of a rude wall of sun-dried bricks, and mounds of enormous size, upon which were scattered innumerable fragments of pottery—the sure tokens of former habitations.

The interest excited by the reports of various travellers, during the present century, kept these ruins fresh in the memory of the curious, and in 1873 a well-organized expedition from England, began the work of exploration in good earnest. It will be needless to give details of the result of these labors. Every thing went to confirm the previous impressions concerning the vastness and magnificence of Nineveh. Fancy might easily sketch a picture of it, spreading along the eastern bank of the Tigris, and covering an area of sixty miles in circumference; its walls (as classic writers assure us) a

hundred feet high, broad enough for three chariots to drive abreast, and guarded by fifteen hundred lofty towers.

It was to the inhabitants of this great city, that the prophet Jonah was sent, with a message from God. Although the people were wholly given to idolatry, and knew not the God of heaven, He had not lost sight of them.

Nineveh was a city devoted to worldly vanities; puffed up with a sense of its importance; a city of palaces and temples; of princes and warriors; a city which aspired after universal dominion.

At last, its cup of wickedness was full to the brim, and the prophet Nahum (whose prophecy is both the complement and the counterpart of the book of Jonah) pronounced its fearful doom. "Woe to the bloody city," he cries, "it is all full of lies and robbery." "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; . . . I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame" (Nahum iii. 1-5).

"The naked, discrowned corpse of the glorious city is cast out to the scorn and disgust of the world. No spark of pity mingles with the prophet's delight. 'All that hear the report of thee shall clap their hands at thee, for upon whom did not thy wickedness continually pass?' Under this doom, Nineveh vanishes from view, to be no more seen till in our day the discovery of her buried remains has given new life to the whole of this portion of sacred history" (Dean Stanley).

We go back, now, to the time of Jonah (almost one hundred and thirty years before that of Nahum), and join company with him, as he enters the gates of Nineveh.

It will be unnecessary to relate that part of his history, in which he appears in such an unfavorable light; trying, in the cowardice of his heart, to flee from duty, and to escape from the presence of the Lord.

He has now recovered his self-possession, and we see him with firm step, and determined face, making his way into the city. He no longer trembled at the stern aspect of the bristling warriors who guarded the entrance, nor noticed the regal splendor of the palaces, and the gorgeous chariots and horsemen, as he passed along the crowded street. He had a high mission to perform, and this occupied all his thoughts. His preaching seems to have been finished in a single day. He walked through the city, from end to end, repeating the startling words which God had commanded him to speak: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

How the people must have stared, in blank amazement, as they beheld this strange man, wrapped in his rough garment of hair cloth, and uttering this alarming cry.

"Who, and what is he?" is asked, and no one could answer. Can he be a madman, escaped from his keepers? or some simple-hearted fanatic? Jonah's intelligent and sober aspect show the absurdity of such a supposition. His whole appearance betokens one whose soul is alive to the importance of his mission. "His utterance, like that of the wild preacher in the last days of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, is one piercing cry, from street to street, and square to square. It reaches at last the king on his throne of state. The remorse for the wrong and robbery and violence of many generations

is awakened" (Stanley). In one day, the grace of God prevailed, and the whole population repented, and turned from their evil ways. The voice of Jonah, like a trumpet-blast, shook the city.

"The conversion of a whole people upon one day's preaching of a single stranger, stands in contrast with the many years during which, God says (Jeremiah vii. 25), 'Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them, yet they hearkened not unto Me.' Many of us wondered what the prophet did on the other thirty-nine days; people have imagined the prophet preaching as moderns would, or telling them his own wondrous story of his desertion of God, his miraculous punishment, and, on his repentance, his miraculous deliverance. Jonah says nothing of this. The one point he brought out was the conversion of the Ninevites. This he dwells on in circumstantial details. His own part he suppresses; he would be, like St. John Baptist, but the voice of one crying in the wild waste of a city of violence" (Dr. Pusey).

Wonderful preaching, this preaching of Jonah! Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and the few who were saved in the ark were melancholy witnesses of its comparative unprofitableness.

Jonah preached for one day, and the wicked inhabitants of Nineveh humbled themselves in the dust.

The mighty king of Assyria, before whom ministers of state fell down in abject submission, trembled as he heard the word of doom, and his stubborn heart was softened. He laid aside his royal robes, and clad in sackcloth, he sat down among the ashes.

Moreover, he sent forth a royal decree, appointing sackcloth and ashes for man and beast, and calling every one to turn from his evil way, and from the violence of his hands.

"Who can tell," said these terrified idolaters, in their dire extremity, "who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?"

The inhabitants of Nineveh did not humble themselves in vain. The Almighty One did turn aside from the fierceness of His indignation, and He destroyed them not. The people of this generation look back over the long lapse of ages which separate the proud capital of Assyria from us, and fancy that not only is all its magnificence a heap of rubbish, and its crowded population mere dust and ashes, but that God has ceased to notice the doings of men, with the scrutinizing watchfulness of those early days.

Surely, they who talk after this absurd fashion have forgotten our Saviour's words: "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*"

The people of Nineveh, ignorant and wicked heathen though they were, repented, when threatened with temporal judgment, by a mere man; while the chosen people of God, professing to be enlightened, when threatened with eternal punishment, by the Son of God Himself, hardened their hearts against Him.

The Ninevites heard only a call to repentance, but for us, there is the announcement of mercy, and the gift of grace to repentance.

To the inhabitants of our cities, no less than He did to Nineveh of old, does God give the solemn warning: "Repent." "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. xviii. 30).

The evil world seeks to silence the voice of conscience, and the voice of God. An inordinate love of riches, and of the vanities of life, lead thousands to disregard the warnings, the invitations, and the threatenings of Him who desireth not the death of a sinner, but who would have all come to repentance.

The covetous will not diminish their growing heaps of treasure by giving God His portion. The grasping and unjust refuse to abandon the successful arts of fraud. The slave of strong drink, with his eyes open to his certain doom, staggers on, in stolid unconcern.

Meanwhile, the day is fast approaching, when the men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment, against all such transgressors of God's law, and condemn them. Condemn them, because they persist in sinning against light and knowledge; against the promises and the warnings of the gospel of the Son of God. "There is no room in these promises for criticism. You can sit down and try to twist them and turn them in every way that unbelieving ingenuity may devise, but every promise of grace is through the work of Jesus Christ, and they are there to be believed or to be cast away. They relate to the past, and they tell me that my sins are blotted out. They relate to the present, and they assure me that in the work of Jesus Christ there is provision for daily forgiveness and help. They open up the future, so that it is bright and glorious. Let me ask even that man among

you who deems the truths of the gospel to be vain things: Where is the folly of these things? Where is the folly of a man's preparing for eternity? Is it folly to escape that which his own conscience echoes, the judgment of 'God which is to come?' (S. H. Tyng, Jr.)

The men of Nineveh, who lived so long before the days of Bibles, and churches, and the constant repetition of the story of redeeming love, shall rise in judgment against the perverse and headstrong of this generation, and shall condemn them.

Some of you have heard the gospel preached for years and years. Some of you have had religious parents, who set you a good example, who taught you the truths which gave them so much happiness and peace, and who never ceased to pray for you, until God called them home. These helps and encouragements for good, you have wilfully set at naught; and you will soon have to answer to Him for your folly. Even after so long a time, however, He still calls upon you to repent.

The most eloquent man who lives can not expect to do what Jonah did, but God bids each Christian man and woman to be doing all he can.

A rich merchant was about to die, when his family physician,—a Christian,—thought he would say a few words to him concerning the salvation of his soul. The dying man listened a moment with patience, and then said: "Doctor, how long have you known these things?"

"For a good while," answered the physician, feeling very strangely, as his patient looked up to him, with a piercing gaze.

"You have been a Christian all this while; you have been in my store every day; you saw how worldly I

was, and never told me about these things until now,—when it is too late!”

The rich merchant died without hope. His most intimate and trusted friend, had never, until a dying hour, spoken to him, of the one thing needful.

May no reproachful, mocking eyes, be turned on us, and the withering rebuke be spoken: “You never told me about these things until it was too late!”

SERMON LXVII.

WORK AND WAGES.

(Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.)

“Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed.”—PSALM xxxvii. 3.

REAL as the causes of our anxieties may be, there is too much of what is called “Crossing the bridge, before we come to it!”

When Henry Crabb Robinson, the distinguished English barrister, heard that his friend, Mrs. Flaxman, had been struck with paralysis, he began to be unhappy about himself, lest a like misfortune should come upon him. Even when the good woman had so far recovered as to take a pleasant trip to France, the strong-minded lawyer continued to torment himself with groundless forebodings. He, however, lived to be ninety-two, and enjoyed as large a measure of happiness as falls to the lot of any of us.

The true secret of being useful, and free from needless fears, is to cultivate sunshine. The text is one of those sweet and comforting promises, on which the faint-hearted and desponding would be wise to meditate. “*Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed.*”

The conditions on which our Heavenly Father agrees to protect and provide for His people, are distinctly stated in this verse. The first is,

I. That we trust in Him. The familiar words of the Prayer Book express the same important point: "Grant, that in all our troubles, we may put our whole trust and confidence in Thy mercy."

God's power to bless is not more boundless than His willingness to do so.

Aye, He "is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask, or think" (Ephes. iii. 20).

There must be confidence in the heart towards God; indeed, the beginning and the end of true religion is confidence. However much we may have seemed to plead and pray in vain, God has treasured up each sigh, and groan, and agonizing tear; and the answer will surely come. If we do not always get what we ask for, it will be something better.

Those who would make sure of God's love and favor, must not only "trust in Him," but remember to be diligent in:

II. Doing good.

If each one of us will do his best to make even one other fellow-mortal happy every day, three thousand six hundred and fifty will have been rendered more comfortable by us, in the course of ten short years; not a small contribution to the stock of general joy.

It is a grievous mistake to suppose that only wealthy people can enjoy the luxury of doing good.

A poor man living on the borders of a desert, used to carry a pitcher of cold water, every day, to the dusty thoroughfare, and leave it for the refreshment of any travellers who might pass that way. So, also, moral fountains may be opened by the wayside, for the benefit of fellow-travellers like ourselves, for the eternal world.

Little as we may have felt disposed to put ourselves to trouble for the sake of others, there is not one of us who might not have brought some person to God's house for the mere asking. The man who sets an example of strict integrity, in the midst of this dishonest age is preaching a most useful sermon.

When Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States, and the Spanish ambassador was polite enough to send him as a present a portion of a case of champagne imported for his own use, and on which no duty had been paid. The president wrote a confidential note to the collector of the custom-house, enclosing the amount which any private citizen would be expected to pay, and begging that his name might not be mentioned.

His short letter ought to be framed and hung up in all places of honor and trust, as a rebuke to the loose morality which is the disgrace of our own degenerate days.

One is enabled to set an example of thankfulness and trust in God, which will be an encouragement to others who are careful and troubled about many things. Another exerts an influence for good, by showing a forgiving spirit.

The shepherds led Bunyan's pilgrims to Mount Charity, where they pointed out a man with a bundle of cloth, out of which he cut garments for the poor that stood about him; and yet his roll of cloth never became less: "This shows you," explained the shepherds, "that he who has a heart to give of his labor for the poor, shall never want wherewithal."

The cake which the widow made for God's prophet, out of her scanty store, did not leave less in the barrel.

One reason why so many remain inactive, and do nothing for the good of others, is because they have adopted the absurd notion that every thing must be done according to certain cast-iron rules.

Years ago, while the inspector-general of garrisons, was visiting a provincial town in France, he noticed a sentinel stationed at a little distance outside the walls, keeping guard over some ruined buildings in the suburbs. On asking the man why he was kept there, he referred the officer for information to his sergeant, and he, in turn, sent him to the lieutenant.

The lieutenant sheltered himself behind the authority of the commandant of the garrison, and the last named official gravely said that he knew nothing about the matter, and that he was merely carrying out the instructions of his predecessor.

A careful search among the archives of the municipality disclosed the fact, that in 1720, when the old buildings of the Faubourg had been a storehouse for mattresses belonging to the government, it became desirable to paint the door. While the paint was wet, a guard was stationed outside, to warn those who went in and out, not to soil their clothes; but, before the paint was dry, the officer on duty was sent away to a distant point, and forgot to have the sentinel removed.

Thus, for a hundred and thirty years, a guard had watched before the door; a sacred and inviolable tradition, which serves to illustrate the absurdity of dealing too much in red tape!

Ritual and rubrics are of great importance, in their way, and a wise man will never undervalue them; but if good remains undone, while smooth roads are prepared,

along which our nicely adjusted machinery can move, let other and less perfect agencies be resorted to.

One of our elder clergy (Dr. Tyng) tells with pride, of a quiet, unassuming lad in his Sunday school, who had given himself to Jesus, and who longed and labored to do good.

At the usual age, he secured a place in a store, and his aptitude and honesty having been abundantly proved, he received the appointment of station agent and clerk at a railway depot, about which a little village was beginning to spring up. His lodging was in the rude office, and the whole business of the station was left in his hands. There was only one place of worship, and that belonged to a denomination so far removed from all ordinary ideas of orthodoxy, that the young clerk could not think of attending there; and when the first Sunday came, he must begin his own personal career.

Trusting in the Lord, and resolved to do good, he did not hesitate for a moment. At the usual hour of morning service, he retired to his little office, and taking his Bible and Prayer Book, he went through with every part of our beautiful worship, and read a sermon; himself the officiating minister, and the only visible hearer.

After the accustomed intermission, the evening service was celebrated in like manner.

The young man really enjoyed these holy offices; his lonely condition was forgotten, and his good resolutions were strengthened.

The next day, an Englishman who was there as a fish-dealer, serving with his wheel-barrow, said to the astonished railroad clerk: "I heard that you opened an Episcopal Church yesterday. Do you mean to keep it up?"

‘Certainly.’

“May I come next Sunday?”

“Very glad to have you.”

Sunday came, and the young man found his congregation increased to two; the fish-dealer and his wife, who brought their old English Prayer Books, and joined heartily in the service.

Another week passed, and the little church had grown to be seven in number.

Matters were getting on too prosperously, and it was time to look for a drawback. An organized opposition remonstrated with the railroad company against allowing their little office to be “used for sectarian purposes,” and the people were forbidden to assemble.

This unreasonable hostility awakened a defence; two generous-spirited lawyers hired a large room in the tavern, and placed it at the disposal of the young clerk. And so the good work went on, until a church was established, and the bishop came and administered confirmation.

Such efforts require energy and wisdom, but not more than even a boy may possess; and when the heart is set on doing good, God will be sure to help.

All can not accomplish the same things, but all can do something for the Lord. Old John Newton used to say: “I have seen three wonders in my time. I have seen men of great wealth and talent, who have had many opportunities of forwarding the cause of God, do nothing. I have seen many humble and despised individuals, whose hearts were right with God, do wonders; but the greatest wonder of all is to find that so humble a person as I am, should have been at all useful in the work.”

When we remember that the clergyman who said this,

was once a very wicked man, and, among other questionable pursuits, brought negroes from Africa, in English ships, and sold them as slaves in far-off lands, we can readily suppose that the good Lord who made an instrument of great good out of John Newton, has some work for each of us.

It may, perhaps, stir up the lagging energies of some nominal Christian, to be told that, after eighteen hundred years of labor and self-sacrifice, two thirds of the human family, for which Christ died, never heard His blessed name!

In trying to do something for God's glory, let us keep in mind that the grandest work is that which is done in the humblest spirit. "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (St. Matt. xx. 28).

SERMON LXVIII.

GODLINESS A HELP TO LONGEVITY.

(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

"Length of days is in her right hand."—PROVERBS iii., part of 16th verse.

MANY of us have a painful recollection of the dismal Sunday-school books provided for our early instruction, in which good children, almost as a matter of course, pined away with sickness, and died young. So general was this rule, that we were sometimes afraid even to try to be good, lest an untimely grave should be our portion.

It is hard to imagine how any such gloomy impressions ever gained a foothold in the minds of intelligent people, unless it be considered as the outgrowth of a system of religion which looked upon every one who enjoyed the innocent pleasures of life, and was cheerful and happy, as an incorrigible reprobate. So far from being true, that good men, women, and children die sooner than others, the reverse is actually the case. As wickedness acts as a shortener of life, so does a regard for God's wholesome laws help to lengthen it.

"Investigations have been made of late years into the effect of intemperate habits on the length of life, not with a view to moral lessons at all, but simply in search of a basis for pecuniary transactions. Out of a given number of persons, and in a given number of years, where one

hundred and ten of the general population would have died, there died of the drinkers three hundred and fifty-seven. Life Assurance Societies proceed upon these facts and laws. A young man will risk his life and his soul on the lie that his fast life is consistent with a long life; but let him try to effect a life assurance on himself, and he will find that the capitalist will not intrust his money on such a frail security" (Arnot).

It is an unnatural thing for one to desire to die, before he has finished his work on earth. Our Creator has implanted the love of life within us, and even after people have lost their limbs and their eyesight, by disease or accident, they still desire to remain with their kindred and friends. It is only when painful and lingering sickness has worn out the energies of body, and weakened the mental faculties, that one is brought to pray for the release from suffering, which death alone can bring.

Surely it can not be wrong in us to love life, when God promises it to His children as a special blessing.

Thus, the young man is exhorted to obey the laws of virtue and religion, because they will secure for him "length of days" and happiness (Prov. iii. 2).

The Heavenly Queen, true Religion, proclaims aloud, that all may hear, that "*Length of days is in her right hand.*"

Again, in the psalms, God promises to satisfy with "long life," the man who departs from evil, and who follows that which is good (xxxiv. 12-15, and xci. 15-16).

If it be wrong to desire this blessing, why did St. Paul give it as a reason for children to obey their parents, that they might "live long on the earth"? (Eph. vi. 1-3).

It is easy to discover why a regard to this law is con-

ducive to length of days. Obedient children will be most likely to avoid the vices and crimes which shorten life. Every wise parent will endeavor to train up his child to be sober and industrious; to control his temper, and to keep all his desires under due restraint.

In marked contrast with the promises of long life, which God makes to the good and true of heart, notice His threatenings against evil doers. "Blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Ps. lv. 25).

The wild scape-grace Absalom perished by the hand of Joab; and so the catalogue might be spun out to an interminable length.

From what has just been said, the inference may be fairly drawn that it certainly is not wrong to desire to live to a good old age.

This love of life is by no means peculiar to man as a fallen being. There is no doubt that Adam clung to it as tenaciously as the most timid and feeblest among ourselves. This love of life, in him, was a fragment of immortality; in us, it is a looking forward to an existence without end. "Take away this principle of the love of life, and the whole fabric of society would be shaken. The power of the civil magistrate would lose its strong hold on the minds of the rebellious; vice would set no limits to the extent of its profligacy, for no dread would attach to the sternest penalties. The love of life has stood like a guardian angel, in many an hour of anguish and despair; it has held fast the uplifted arm, and whispered soothing things of to-morrow" (Melvill).

If any one should ask me why I desired that "length of days" might be my portion. I would frankly answer:

I. That I wished it because life is pleasant, and the world, in spite of seasons of clouds and storms, is a beautiful one. It is not so fair, indeed, as when our first parents dwelt in Eden, before the curse of sin had scattered thorns and briars amidst its flowers; but still quite fair enough to render it a pleasant dwelling-place, until we are educated up to the standard of a higher state of being.

No one can look out upon the summer landscape, bathed in golden sunlight, without feeling the goodness of God in surrounding us with so much beauty; and even when the Frost King has spread his icy covering over hill and dale, and turned the surface of lakes and rivers into a glassy pavement, we still discover abundant cause to bless the Lord for ice and snow, and to admire the wonderful ordering of His providence, which brings summer and winter in their unvarying course. Moreover, we love life for its many comforts and enjoyments. The seasons of pleasure far outnumber those of pain, and our times of sickness are generally counted by hours and days, while those of health mount up to weeks and months.

Who can ever estimate the pleasures of the family circle; the genial intercourse of friends; the cultivation of refinement and taste; the peculiar satisfaction which attends literary labors; the accumulation of property as a provision against the season of old age, and that we may bear our part in works of beneficence and charity; and, above all, the elevating pursuit of heavenly wisdom?

The broken-hearted spendthrift, the miserable debauchee, and the sour misanthrope may speak despairingly of life and its enjoyments, if it suits their caprice

to do so; but we know that God has placed us here to be happy, and we are certain to be happy, in proportion as we strive to be good.

II. Again: Any right-minded person will value life, and be glad to have it prolonged, because it is a season of usefulness.

See the fond mother, with her innocent children; is it not natural and right that she should desire to live long, that she may train them up in the way they should go, and thus fit them for the duties of this world, and for the delights of the next?

Take any honest calling in life, and God smiles upon him who pursues it with diligence and care, provided, always, that the higher claims of religion be not left out of view. Aye, He has implanted in the breast of each one a desire to live longer, that still larger results may be attained.

It was the great apostle to the Gentiles, the most saintly of all saints, who reminds us that diligence in business should go hand in hand with the service of God (Romans xii. 11); and a greater than St. Paul, even our Divine Lord, prayed for His disciples, not that they might be taken out of the world, but that they might "be kept from the evil" (St. John xvii. 15).

III. Again: We might all desire length of days upon earth, that we may be the better prepared to meet God.

Although He is a kind and indulgent Father, we must confess to ourselves that we have all been wayward children, and that instead of studying to serve and please Him, we have been too much disposed to have our own way.

God is not satisfied with a few and occasional acts of

obedience, nor with a cold and heartless service, but He demands of us the homage of the heart. Preparation for the judgment day, consists in our having acquired this state of mind. Such being the case, what person of sound mind is there, who does not desire to live longer, that he may make his calling and election sure?

Besides the considerations already suggested, this thought may be added, that since death was the curse once pronounced upon our race for Adam's transgressions, all of us by nature, have an instinctive dread of death. If we were permitted to pass at once, to the presence of our Father in heaven, without first yielding to the dominion of the Destroyer we should be satisfied to depart; but the damps and the darkness of the Valley of Death are appalling to the sight.

A dread of death is a part of our nature, and Christians as well as others, must expect to bear something of it about with them; but, blessed be God's name, our Lord and Saviour will give us the victory at the last.

Eternity alone is the real life-time of the soul. The day of our departure hence is the soul's birthday.

Mere animal existence, eating, drinking, breathing, sleeping, moving about the earth, this is not real life. We only live in deed and in truth, when soul and body are both cared for; not one to the neglect of the other, even though it be the soul which is looked after, at the expense of its clay tabernacle:

"Life is real; life is earnest;
And the grave is not its goal."

Nay! at our baptism we were brought into new relations with God; each one being "made a member of

Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

There is a gloomy way of speaking of ourselves as dying creatures, but it would be much nearer the truth to talk with gratitude and joy of our lofty dignity, and of the sublime fact that we are partakers of everlasting life.

Desire length of days, that they may be days of usefulness and happiness, and a season of preparation for better days to come. A life without a purpose is utterly unworthy of him on whom God has bestowed mental gifts, and the gift of immortality.

The other day a physician was sitting by the bedside of a young girl, over whose gradual decline he had watched for months with painful interest; but all was so calm, so sweet, so confident in the manner of this gentle Christian, that her couch of suffering seemed a very throne of glory.

"My dear," said the kind-hearted, sympathizing doctor, "I have just witnessed a scene which impressed me greatly." He then went on to describe his visit to a sick person, whose peril was eminent, and over whom father and mother bent with anxious eyes. The father, who made no pretensions to being a religious man, walked the floor in agony, and then, rushing to his wife, he cried aloud: "O pray for our darling child!"

"Ah!" added the physician as he described the thrilling scene, "men may hold their heads very high and defiantly on the street, and pretend neither to believe in God, nor to care aught about the future; but let death come near them or theirs, and the tune is changed. They are the very first to cry aloud to God, and they get them to their Lord right humbly."

Dear friends, whatever else we may be, let us try to be consistent. While we enjoy the life that now is, and thank God for it, let us also be mindful of that which is to come.

"This world is but the rugged road
Which leads us to the bright abode
Of peace above;
So let us choose that narrow way,
Which leads no traveller's foot astray
From realms of love.

"Our cradle is the starting-place,
Life is the running of the race,
We reach the goal
When, in the mansions of the blest,
Death leaves to its eternal rest
The weary soul."

(MANRIQUE, TRANS. BY LONGFELLOW.)

SERMON LXIX.

CARING FOR THE SOULS OF OTHERS.

(Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

"No man cared for my soul."—PSALM cxlii., part of 4th verse.

THE psalm from which the text is taken, is a prayer of David, in the cave of Adullam, when pursued by jealous and vindictive Saul. It has a further application to our blessed Lord, who looked in vain for any to help and comfort Him, and who was left alone in His sorrows and His agony. David, in the bitterness of his distress, and the Divine Saviour, of whom David was a type, both cry aloud, in the depth of despair, "*No man careth for my soul!*"

If we think only of ourselves, of our own comfort, or convenience, or safety, our selfishness is most inexcusable.

The whole life of our blessed Lord, on earth, was one of sympathy and compassion; and the more we are conformed to His image, the more sympathy and compassion we shall feel, for the sorrows and sufferings of others.

It serves no practical purpose to philosophize about such a point as this, but we must try to bring it closer home. The text may be regarded as the language of complaint and reproach, and it plainly implies that some one might have cared for the suffering and despairing soul, had he chosen to do so.

It is not only vast regions, dark and dead, through

the debasing influences of heathenism, which beckon onward the philanthropist and the Christian to help, but there is an important work to be done at our very doors.

I. Take the case of some poor child that you know of; a child left to the tender mercies of an ignorant, heartless parent; a child suffered to run at large, without even the appearance of control; a child who, for lack of better teaching, robs gardens and orchards, and, unconsciously, is growing up a thief, and a candidate for the state prison; a child, already accustomed to indulge in shocking oaths; a child, exposed, each day and hour, to temptations in every form. This neglected child might be brought to Sunday school and church; might be taught to shun even petty dishonesty as a sin; might be kept from speaking the language of demons; might at least be shielded from the more alluring forms of temptation.

And, yet, you Christian men and women who are fully aware of his peril, give yourselves no concern to save him. O! if he drift onward in his evil course, and sink at last to the pit of woe, will it bring you no disquietude and remorse, should he look up with piteous and imploring eyes, and say, as if in extenuation of his fault, "*No man cared for my soul?*"

II. Again: You are on friendly and familiar terms with many irreligious people, over whom you might easily exercise some influence for good. They visit, often, at your houses, and you chat with them daily on the street.

You trade with them, and discuss the news of the day. You argue political questions by the hour, with all the earnestness which religious enthusiasts manifest

about the interests of eternal life; and yet, you, who claim to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be working for Him, have never once opened your lips to them about the interests of their souls.

There is always room enough for them in your pew, and you have never invited them to come with you to the house of prayer. Your conduct towards these irreligious people has been such, that they have had no reason to suspect that you do not consider them quite safe for time and for eternity.

Every such neglected neighbor and friend could assign as a sufficient reason why he was so recklessly indifferent about religion, "*No man cared for my soul.*"

Indeed, he might safely add, that so far as these Christians were concerned, he should never have known whether he had a soul which might be saved or lost.

A few years ago, during a period of unusual interest in religion, a zealous minister said to an able lawyer belonging to his flock: "You had better go and converse with our friend So-and-so," naming a scoffing infidel, well known to both. "He appreciates an able argument as readily as any body, and you might do him some good by laying before him the proofs on which the Christian system rests."

"I have done that already," answered the lawyer, "and he heard me through patiently, and then pounced on my arguments like a tiger on his prey, winding up with bitter reproaches which made me dread to encounter him again."

Another good man to whom the minister applied, gave very much the same account, but added, that having accomplished nothing by his controversy with the

scoffer, he had concluded to change his plan, and remember him in his daily prayers. So he kept on for months, until one blustering winter's day, he rode on horseback for several miles to the house of this unfortunate infidel, and with tears in his eyes, exclaimed: "Neighbor, you look amazed to see me this dreadful morning, but I could not help coming to tell you how greatly I am concerned for your salvation."

His feelings so completely overcame him, that he could say no more, and slowly rode away. The infidel was amazed, and, as he afterwards related, he repeated aloud to himself the strange words: "Greatly concerned for my salvation!"

Here was a new argument for religion which he had never dreamed of. Had his friend reasoned with him, he could have returned an answer of some sort, but here was no thread-bare argument, and he said to himself: "Religion must move the soul with beneficent and holy impulses, or this man would not feel as he does."

"Greatly concerned for your salvation!" the words rang in his ears like a thunder-clap in a clear sky. "Greatly concerned ought I to be for my own salvation!" he cried, and rushed into the house, much to the alarm of his poor wife, who asked him what was the matter.

"Matter enough," was his abrupt response: "A kind friend has ridden two miles this cold morning, to tell me that he was greatly concerned for my salvation. What shall I do?" Suffice it to add, that the awakened infidel sought mercy and found it.

If all of us, my friends, who claim to be Christians, would show by our conduct that we really cared for the souls of those who are living unmindful of their obliga-

tions to God, our labor of love would be wonderfully blessed.

III. As another illustration of the text, I remark, that even when people have become members of God's family, the Church, they need and long for the kindly sympathy of those who belong to the household of faith.

Bishop Lay tells of a boy of sixteen who once went forward to be confirmed in a church where he was a stranger, fearful, doubting, and greatly troubled. The service ended and he was about to depart, when an old lady who did not even know his name, caught him by the hand and said: "My son, I am glad to see you here: I hope the Lord will prosper you!" Simple words, and yet they braced him as a cordial, and he felt strong and comforted. The recollection of that kind old lady's words has often made him pause, and say to a new recruit just buckling on his armor: "God bless you!"

Such small attentions which cost so little, are often of more substantial service than any thing we do.

IV. Besides the three classes already described, who may justly complain of our lack of interest in their behalf, there are those who, having learned by sad experience, the folly and wretchedness of a life of sin, would gladly return into better ways, if they only knew how to accomplish it. They look with wistful and even envious eyes on those more favored ones who have been kept aloof from the slippery paths which lead downward to destruction; but where is the hand of kindness and encouragement to lead them back? When do they hear one tender word of remonstrance or warning? Is not the secret yearning of such a forlorn, but repentant sinner; to do better in time to come, actually crushed out by the

bitter reflection that no one cares for his soul? And when the minister of God, following in the steps of His Divine Lord, goes about the lanes and by-ways of a world lying in wickedness, seeking for the wandering sheep, how many there are even among professing Christians, to laugh at his amiable credulity, or to expostulate with him on his extraordinary and impolitic course!

And when the poor lost one (once profane, intemperate, and disreputable) comes in rags and wretchedness to the open door of his Father's house, how long he stands shivering without, while brethren snugly sheltered within deliberately question his motives, and express grave doubts of his steadfastness; and the heart-broken prodigal wrings his hands, with the bitter cry of anguish, "*No man cares for my soul!*"

How little of the Saviour's tender compassion is felt by those who bear His blessed Name! What measure of mercy can Christians expect for themselves, when they mete it out so grudgingly to others!

The saying of Old Edie Ochiltree in Walter Scott's *Antiquary*, that wall flowers "smell sweetest by night-time," and are most often "seen about ruined buildings," has been beautifully versified by Bishop Doane, in lines as fresh and fragrant as violets in the early spring.

"'Sweetest by night,' like gracious words,
That scent the sacred page;
But freeliest pour their perfumed store,
In sickness, grief, and age.

"'Seen most by ruins,' like the love,
That gave itself for all;
Yet closest clings to guiltiest things,
As Magdalene or Saul."

Six hundred children were assembled a year or so ago at a feast in one of the Christian missions in the Society Islands. They marched in procession through the settlement, dressed in the ordinary attire of civilized lands, with little hats and bonnets made by those very parents who would have destroyed them, as their forefathers had been wont to do, had not the heralds of salvation been sent to teach them better.

The children with their parents filled the spacious chapel, and the eyes of some beamed with delight, as the proud father said to his wife: "What a mercy it is that we spared our dear girl!"

Bitter tears rolled down the pale, sad faces of others, telling the dreadful story of the innocent children murdered in cold blood by their cruel hands.

One venerable chief, hoary with age, could no longer restrain the pent up anguish of his soul, but rising, he exclaimed with impassioned look and gesture: "Let me speak; I must speak. Oh that I had known that the gospel was coming! my children would have been among this happy company; but alas! I destroyed them all!"

The blessed gospel has come to us, and we (whether ministers or people, men or women), we are to make known its privileges of grace and salvation, to those who are strangers to God, and the atoning sacrifice of His dear Son. If we will but open our ears to hear, the piteous complaint will startle us as it rises from the ignorant and the outcast in our own town and neighborhood: "*No man cares for our souls!*"

SERMON LXX.

WAITING FOR GOD'S LOVING KINDNESS IN HIS TEMPLE.

(Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.)

"We wait for Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple."

PSALM xlviii. 8.

A MINISTER relates that he had in his congregation a very aged woman, who had for many years been so deaf as not to distinguish the loudest sound, but who was always one of the first to come to the place of worship.

On asking the reason of her constant attendance, under circumstances so peculiar, her answer was, that though she could not hear the preacher's voice, she found happiness in being present in God's house, where she felt herself to be in His more immediate presence, and in the society of His people.

Man is naturally a religious being, and he will worship something. The benighted nations of the earth, even in the midst of their most silly and degraded idolatries, are giving constant evidence of this fact.

More than this: man not only feels an irresistible impulse to worship something, but he becomes, in some degree, like the object of his devotion. Odin and Thor, the gods of the ancient Scythians, were ideal hero-kings, blood-thirsty and revengeful, and those who bowed down

before their cruel shrines learned to revel in scenes of blood. The pure and holy Being whom the Christian worships, inspires His people with a love of purity and perfection, and it is His will that they who are dependent on His daily bounty, should render unto Him worship and adoration.

Wherever God has marked out specific duties for His people, He has connected with their observance or neglect, rewards and penalties. In this matter of public worship, the Almighty has never failed to bestow blessings on those who have sought His favor in the holy places called by His name. "I will make them joyful in My house of prayer" (Is. lvi. 7).

The temples set apart, by appropriate solemnities, from "all ordinary and common uses," for the preaching of God's word, for the offering of prayer and praise, and for the administration of the blessed sacraments, are objects of glory and beauty; pointing us, by their heavenward spires, to our Father's home; and calling us, by their sweet music, to share His welcome in His chosen dwelling-place. Devout believers, accordingly, enter into the true spirit of the text, and say: "*We wait for Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple!*"

The hazardous and foolish experiment has been often tried, of making light of such sound and Scriptural views; the altar has been ruthlessly torn away, and the beautiful carved work battered down; men have kept on their hats when they crossed the threshold, and ideas of sacredness have been mocked at. And with what result? The desecration of sacred things, beginning thus, at the house of God, has gone on, until the Bible itself has been tampered with; the holy sacraments are frittered

away into mere outward signs; and even the Divine Redeemer, and the Blessed Comforter, are robbed of their glory.

The sacredness which belongs to God's holy temple is therefore no idle superstition, but a great and encouraging truth.

If, like holy Paul, we could be caught up into the third heaven, would it be the glorious visions vouchsafed us, which would form the most precious element in the gift? Nay, verily, but rather the privilege of falling prostrate before the High and Holy One, in His very presence, and of supplicating forgiveness and blessing.

Had we lived in Judea, in the days when Jesus dwelt among men, should we have accounted it as the best gift, that we were allowed to behold the Divine beauty of His countenance, and to witness His marvellous acts?

Can any one doubt that the more precious privilege would have been, to cry aloud, like blind Bartimæus, "Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me?"

Now, these very privileges, which reason teaches us to be the greatest and the best, are granted to such as "wait" for God's loving kindness, in the midst of His temple.

There is wonderful power in united worship. We all feel it, and even irreligious people are attracted to the place where it is celebrated.

How enlivening and glorious is the hymn of praise, in which hundreds of voices are blended, as in one, like the sound of many waters!

Victories are gained by song, and Satan and the world use this power with marked success. Why, then, should

not the Church employ it for her elevation and joy? "Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob," is a rule quite as binding as any rubric in the Prayer Book.

When all pray, and all sing, then the whole assembly gathered beneath the outspread wings of the Mercy-seat, will be repeating from the ground of the heart, the expressive words: "*We wait for Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple!*"

This busy world is like the enchanted ground, in Pilgrim's Progress, the air of which affected those with drowsiness who had occasion to cross over it.

The cares and perplexities of life, have a natural tendency to engross and lull the mind, until we forget that we are only travellers on our way to a better land. It is, therefore, a blessed privilege which we enjoy, not only of a day of rest, but, also, of a holy place, shut out from the world, where our sluggish memories can be quickened, and Heavenly wisdom gained.

In the Kensington Museum, there is a picture of Dr. Johnson waiting outside in the anteroom of royalty, to take his turn for an audience.

The Lord our God, the King of Glory, is waiting here, in His holy place to-day, and inviting us to draw near, in full assurance of faith, and make known to Him, our gracious and indulgent Father, our several wants.

When Constantine the Great was one day looking at some rare statues of noted persons, who were represented standing, he remarked: "I shall have mine taken kneeling, for it is how I have risen to be what I am!"

So, too, if the Christian would reach any eminent degree in the Divine life, he must often be found on his

bended knees, in the house of prayer, the presence chamber of his God.

We are not to plead, in the spirit of sloth and indifference, that the Omniscient One is present everywhere, and that we can pray as well, and as acceptably, at home. It may be fairly concluded, without any argument on the subject, that God will be better pleased when we come with our petitions to His own house, than when we ask Him to come to ours.

I. "We wait for the loving kindness of God, in the midst of His temple," seeking blessings for our little ones.

One day, while a terrible storm was raging in Sussex, England, the children of the parish clergyman watched its devastating effects from the study window, with that comfortable feeling enjoyed by those who are snugly and safely sheltered.

Presently, they observed a little lamb leave the flock, and by a vigorous effort of its feeble strength, leap up the steep bank of the church-yard; when it turned about, with a most piteous bleat, as if entreating its mother, and other friends, to follow. They, however, only huddled the closer together, and gave no heed to its urgent appeal.

The poor lamb then disappeared from view, and the children feared the worst for it. After the storm had passed, they anxiously sought the gentle creature, and, to their great joy, found it in the church, nestled on the soft carpet, at the foot of the baptismal font.

And so, in the bosom of the Church, many other precious lambs have found shelter and defence. Safe in Jesus' fold, no storm can reach nor harm them.

It was a good part done for your children, Christian

father and mother, when you brought them to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, here in His holy place, that He might embrace them in His gracious arms, and adopt them as His own.

II. To-day, "We wait for the loving kindness of God, in the midst of His temple," that He may confer His grace and blessing on us in the holy sacrament.

There is much more in the Lord's Supper than a mere spiritual presence of Christ, since this is promised to those who meet together on ordinary occasions of public worship.

To be allowed to bow down and adore the King of kings is an honor to be highly valued; but to be united with the Saviour so as to become one spirit with Him is a privilege far greater. As the table is looked upon as the centre of the family circle, "so the Lord's table" (I Cor. x. 21) is the centre of the great family, the Household and Church of God. "He hath given meat unto them that fear Him" (Ps. cxi. v).

The food furnished for us at this table of the Lord is "the children's bread," the refreshment of travellers on their homeward way.

"O God, wonderful art Thou in Thy holy places," was the exclamation of the royal Psalmist (lxviii. 35), and it may well be ours also. All the graces flowing from the works of the divine Redeemer are to be found by the devout and believing soul in the Holy Communion, because in the Holy Communion we find Him.

The reason why some Christians make such slow advancement is because they commune so seldom, or because their belief is so vague, their faith so cold, and their lives so inconsistent and unholy.

When a pagan saw Christians receiving the blessed sacrament, and observed with what outward reverence they demeaned themselves, he was curious to know the design of the institution. The answer was returned, that God having first emptied the hearts of His people of their besetting sins, their pride, envy, covetousness, and contention, did now enter into them Himself, with a purpose to dwell there.

The pagan was silent, but upon watching the behavior of these Christians for only a day or two, he was astonished to discover them engaged in quarrels and falling into grievous sins. We can hardly blame him for the keenness of his satire when he said, "I confess that your religion may be good, and your devotion good; but your hospitality amounts to nothing, since you do not give your God two days' lodging."

May the Holy Spirit, who is the "Author and Giver of life," help all of us who are now "waiting" for "the loving kindness of God," to be more consistent and more holy.

"God is the Lord who hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords; yea, even unto the horns of the altar."

Our dear Lord who is waiting to be gracious unto us would so attract each one of us to Himself, and bind us to his service.

Let any Christian who thinks of neglecting the Holy Communion to-day, remember the Saviour's words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink His blood, there is no life in you!"

SERMON LXXI.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

(*Washington's Birthday.*)

“The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.”—PSALM cxii.,
part of 6th verse.

A QUIANT expositor (John Dean) of 1790 remarks upon this verse, that “The stately and durable pyramids of Egypt have not transmitted to posterity even the names of those buried in them. And what has even embalming done, but tossed them about, and exposed them to all the world, as spectacles to the curious, of meanness, or honor? But the piety of Abraham, of Jacob, of David, and Samuel, of Hezekiah, Josiah, and others, is celebrated to this very day.”

The world has no interest in keeping alive the memory of the wicked, except as warnings to those that come after.

Although this twenty-second of February is not a saint's day, in the calendar of the Church, yet she may well afford to commemorate it as the birthday of one of the noblest of her sons.

A traveller in Nicaragua in 1857 tells us that on approaching a little rural church, he was surprised to discover a well-executed bust of the great leader of our army of the Revolution over the principal entrance. On

asking whose image it was, the answer was promptly returned, "The good saint, George Washington!"

Many more brilliant men have lived, but none truer and nobler than this man, "first in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

It is deserving of careful attention, that every important movement in human affairs has had a fitting instrument, prepared by God Himself, to carry it forward to a successful issue. If the Revolution of 1688 in England had its William, to rescue the liberties of our forefathers from ignoble thralldom, so did Constitutional Liberty, in our own country, have its Washington. I should be ashamed for my countrymen, young or old, if they have not treasured up in their memories a distinct recollection of the incidents which made up the glorious career of the hero, patriot, statesman, and sage, whose birth is celebrated to-day.

The life of George Washington was a model life, always consistent and harmonious. From the early days, when he recited the Church Catechism, in which our own children find the best epitome of Christian doctrines and duties, until as a man he honored the Great Captain of his salvation by a blameless, godly life, and, at last, turning his face to the wall, as he lay upon his dying bed, at Mount Vernon, commended his soul to the keeping of the merciful Redeemer; from first to last he was all that mortal can ever hope to be in the way of goodness and truth.

Would you know the secret of his wisdom, his greatness, and his wonderful success? It was his Christian principle. In public and private affairs, he always acted upon the settled conviction that he could only hope for

prosperity while he endeavored to shape his course in accordance with God's laws:

What a matchless example of public and private virtue, "rising aloft and alone on the field of history, majestic, proportioned, and pure!" (Dr. C. M. Butler.)

While the limits of a short sermon render any attempt to sketch a full-length portrait quite impossible, I must bring to your minds one impressive scene. Called, by the unanimous voice of his countrymen to accept the high office of first President of the Republic, he turned aside to pay his tribute of filial devotion to his venerable mother, then in her eighty-second year. The inauguration services were held in the city of New York, then the capital of the country. It was the 30th of April, 1789. At nine in the morning, prayers had been offered in all the churches, for God's blessing on the new government. By noonday, the streets were thronged, and an eager multitude hurried onward to the Federal Hall. All eyes were fixed on the balcony, where George Washington presently appeared, clad in a plain suit of homespun, with the sword of so much glory by his side.

A tumultuous shout welcomed him, as he stood amidst the chief officers of state. When silence was restored, the chancellor administered the oath,—the hand of Washington resting on the Bible, held by the secretary of state.

The President did not wait, as was expected, for the book to be raised to his lips, but bowing, with lowly reverence he kissed it. The roar of cannon, and the clanging of bells announced the conclusion of the ceremonial.

In our own day, when reverence and faith are at so low an ebb, the proceedings would have ended here. Not so in the times of our fathers.

After Washington had delivered his inaugural address, in the Senate Chamber, the whole vast assemblage attended the President, on foot, to St. Paul's Chapel, where appropriate services were celebrated by Dr. Provoost, the bishop of New York. "The Virginian colonel, who knelt in the wild camp at the Great Meadows, at twenty-two, among the soldiers and the Indians, kneels, now, at fifty-seven, the President of the United States" (Bp. Doane). The promise of the great God, "Them that honor Me, I will honor," was again made good.

I have already said that the secret why Washington was so signally blessed and prospered was, that he feared God, and obeyed His commandments. He always did it. George Washington was "made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," in early infancy by holy baptism; and he never lost sight of the obligations of this relationship to the Most High, nor of the crown of glory which faithful continuance in well-doing could alone secure for him. His religion was not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Do you ask for evidence of this? Before going on to give it, I ought to remind you that the religion of Washington was the religion of the Apostolic Church to which we belong: not an emotional, but an educational religion. Engrafted into the great Christian family in holy baptism, he was carefully "trained up in the way he should go," with the assurance on God's part, that His Holy Spirit would daily help and strengthen him, and enable him to do his duty in that state of life to which he might be called.

Little did George Washington dream what that state

would be! That he was a righteous man is evident, because, throughout his whole life,—

I. He kept up regular habits of prayer. Not only was this the case when he lived in retirement, and during “the piping times of peace,” but in the midst of the distractions of business, and the turmoil of war. While commander-in-chief of the American armies, he was often observed to withdraw to some secluded spot, and on one occasion, a Quaker in the interest of the British, had the curiosity to follow him to a grove to discover what business took him there. To his amazement, he saw the general on his knees engaged in earnest prayer. The Quaker went back to his family and said, in unaffected distress of mind, “Our cause is lost: George Washington is asking the help of the Almighty!”

II. In our own time, when the Lord’s day is treated by many with such marked contempt, it is refreshing to remember that the righteous man whose birth is commemorated to-day, was always very strict in his observance of it.

His “army orders” on the subject are models of what such official orders should be, and his own example in attending public worship was in perfect harmony with his Christian profession. When at a distance from church, he read the church service at home, as all church-members ought to do.

III. Washington also proved that he was a God-fearing man, by never being ashamed to behave himself as a Christian, in all places, and under all circumstances.

He was one of the few who were courageous enough to kneel humbly on their knees, during the first prayer in Congress.

He read the burial service of the Church over General Braddock's grave, and on other like occasions. What a grand subject, this, for the painter!

Washington was an active, pains-taking vestryman of two parishes, and besides many liberal contributions to religious objects; he built a church at his own cost.

He was a devout communicant, thankful by obedience to the Saviour's last commandment, thus to receive spiritual sustenance for his soul.

Washington openly rebuked profane swearing, even at his own table, and when the offending party was an officer of dignified manners, and of good social standing. He was so particular about having a blessing asked before meals, that, through inadvertence, he did it on one occasion, when a clergyman was present.

Washington warmly expostulated with his friend Lafayette, who was about to fight a duel with an English officer, for an insult offered to France.

His Christian liberality was proverbial. While absent from home with the army, serving his country without compensation, and leaving his farms to the mercy of overseers and idle servants, he wrote to Mount Vernon, that the granaries should be thrown open to the poor.

He fitted up a house for a crippled British soldier, who passed his last days under the sheltering care of the great "American rebel."

And so I might go on; but let these particulars suffice. His whole religious training had been in accordance with the Prayer Book. In the pure and holy faith which it had taught him he always lived; and cheered by the blessed hope of the gospel of the Son of God, he was prepared for his departure to a better world.

His death was a painful one, but he merely observed: "I should have been glad, had it pleased God, to die a little easier, but I doubt not it is for my good."

Then, closing his eyes with his own hands, he folded his arms on his breast, and said, with all the artlessness of a little child: "Father of mercies, take me to Thyself!"

Thus George Washington fell asleep. I described, a few moments ago, the inauguration of the first president of the United States, in the city of New York.

On the last day of the year 1799, in the same church where General Washington had implored God's gracious help, on that momentous occasion, funeral services were conducted by the same venerable prelate who had officiated at the inauguration. How fitting the commemoration of the righteous dead, which formed a portion of that solemn service! "Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord,
... we give Thee hearty thanks for the good examples of all those Thy servants who, having finished their course in faith, do now rest from their labors. We laud and magnify Thy glorious name for the eminent virtues exerted in our behalf in sundry times of difficulty and danger by the late commander-in-chief of the armies of these United States. May the invaluable service he has rendered to his country impress us with due gratitude for the fatherly protection which, through him, Thou hast extended to us. May the recollection of them be an incentive to those who shall succeed him in the high and important offices of state, and may posterity, while they shall inherit the lustre of his name, enjoy the benefit of his life in a continuance of the happy consequences of his labors, and in a succession of great and

good men, to Thy glory and the posterity of Thy people, to the end of time."

Ambition, in a lofty sense, is becoming in every one, and a desire to be remembered by those who come after us, is kindled by the promise in the text: "*The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*"

The question for each one to ask himself is, do I belong to this class?

The righteous man is the one who does right; right towards God and man. We may be doing right with reference to our fellow-mortals; but it is even more important that we should be doing it towards God. Be just, single-hearted, philanthropic, pure, as was George Washington, and be also like him, obedient to God, and mindful of the life to come.

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